

RAMDAS SPEAKS

Volume II

Swami Ramdas

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FOREWORD

All the speeches and talks given by Swami Ramdas, including answers to questions, during his World Tour which began on 3rd August 1954 and ended on 2nd January 1955, were first published by Anandashram in ten volumes. As a matter of convenience, the original Volumes 3 and 4 are together published now as this volume. This volume covers Pujya Swamiji's speeches, etc., from 1st to 14th September, 1954, in Switzerland, Germany and France.

The object with which the tour was undertaken is given in the address which he delivered in Bombay on the eve of his departure to Europe and published as Publisher's Note to the first volume. The circumstances in which the tour was conceived and conducted have been described by Swamiji in his book "World is God". The publication of these volumes has been made possible by the indefatigable labours of Swami Satchidananda who accompanied Swami Ramdas and took copious shorthand notes of the talks and speeches at various places.

For the story of Swami Ramdas' life before renunciation, the reader is referred to the book, "Passage to Divinity" by Chandrashekhar. Swamiji, in his autobiographical volumes "In Quest of God" and "In the Vision of God", narrates his spiritual struggles and experiences and gives an account of the founding of the Anandashram to spread the message of Universal Love and Service.

Anandashram P.O.

District Kasaragod

Kerala, South India

ANANDASHRAM

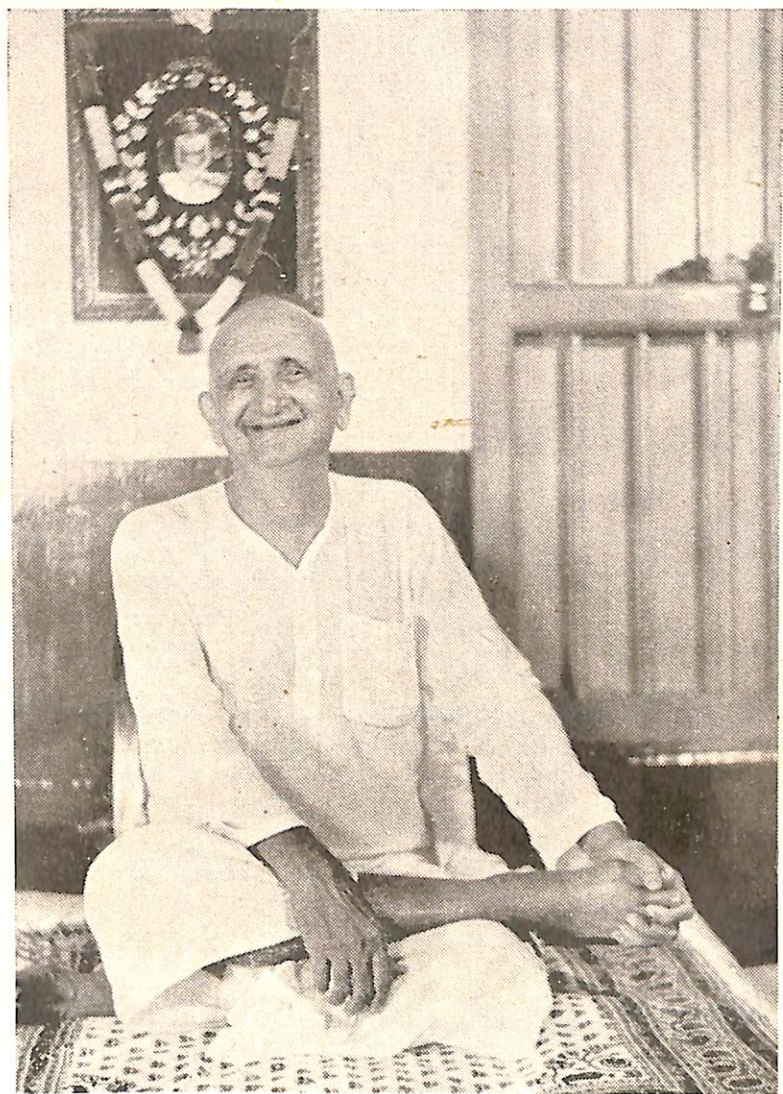
Om Sri Ram jai Ram jai jai Ram

Let your heart be ever
filled with the sweetness
of Ramnam.

All joy and peace to
you.

Hearty Blessings

Randh
13. 4. 57



BELOVED PAPA, SWAMI RAMDAS (1884-1963)

RAMDAS SPEAKS
Volume II
CONTENTS
SWITZERLAND, GERMANY AND FRANCE

Foreword

Page
v

SWITZERLAND

GENEVA

At the residence of Mr. Jean Herbert

1st September 1954

1

Is the world unreal ? 1 ; Three steps to Truth, 1 ; The world is not an illusion, 3 ; Be a light unto others, 3 ; The Difference, 4 ; How to conquer Karma ? 4 ; Freedom is Surrender, 6 ; Freedom is service, 7 ; The Essentials in Japa Yoga, 8 ; From Intellectual acceptance to experience, 9 ; Through forms to the Formless, 10 ; How to dissolve the ego, 11 ; Be aware of the purpose of Japa, 12 ; Commune with God daily, 13 ; Ramdas' experience, 14 ; Need for Faith and Love, 15 ; Sattwic food necessary, 17 ; Aids to Sadhana, 18 ; Meaning of Love of God, 19 ; God is the Doctor of doctors, 20 ; How to avoid conflict between Religions, 21 ; Universality of all Teachers, 23 ; Om Tat Sat, 24 ; Suffering for Self-purification and redemption of others, 25 ; Ramdas' Visions, 26 ; The Vision of Christ, 27 ; Call God by any Name, 28 ; The Christian Trinity, 29 ; Spiritual Guides, 30.

2nd September 1954

32

Our Heaven and Hell, 32 ; Spiritual healing, 33 ; Seek and you shall find, 33 ; Ahimsa, a Quality of the Heart, 34 ; During Meditation, 34 ; Animals cannot realise God, 35 ; Man's Relationship with animals, 35 ; Effect of Human contact on animals, 36 ; Reincarnation—a

Logical Theory, 37 ; You are Deathless and Eternal, 38 ; Significance of Religious Robes, 39 ; On Black and light colours, 40 ; The Significance of Colours, 41 ; Love and Service can work miracles, 42 ; Teach children by example, 43 ; Plants respond to Love, 44 ; Dr. Bose's discovery, 44 ; Ancient Rishis' regard for plant life, 45 ; Ramdas' experiences, 46 ; Music can help, 47 ; Man's and God's sense of Beauty, 48 ; Universalisation breaks all barriers, 49 ; The God-Man is amoral, 49 ; Rites—a matter of Faith, 50 ; The Question of Baptism, 51 ; Purity comes from God, 51 ; An untenable claim, 52 ; Four forms of Salvation in Hinduism, 53 ; "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you", 53 ; No Force in Belief, 54 ; No sense of superiority, 54 ; No spirituality without Love, 55 ; Be Witness of the Divine Lila, 57 ; No gradualness in transformation, 57 ; Grace is self-luminous, 58 ; Self-purification transforms opponents, 60 ; The ultimate aim of Meditation, 61 ; Fill the mind with God-thought, 62 ; A Positive Path, 63 ; How best to help others, 64 ; The Outer Must Reflect the Inner, 65 ; God remembrance mitigates suffering, 66 ; God and Son are One, 66 ; A Common Mistake, 67 ; 'The taste of the pudding is in eating', 68 ; The Christian Trinity is One, 69 ; Om Tat Sat, 69 ; Go back to the Origin, 70 ; The Teaching of Vedanta, 71 ; All Mantras develop Will-power, 72 ; Faith is the first step, 72 ; The Value of Environment, 73 ; How to escape from despair, 74 ; Instructions on Meditation 75.

3rd September 1954

77

The Triple States, 77 ; 'I' persists in all States, 77 ; Realise the Truth beyond the Triple States, 78 ; The Nature of Liberation, 79 ; What happens after death ? 81 ; Physical and Subtle bodies, 82 ; The Mystery of Ignorance, 83 ; The problem of Population, 83 ; God is already within you, 84 ; The Indifference to the world,

CONTENTS

ix

Page

84 ; Sustenance from the Cosmic Power, 86 ; They also help the world, 86 ; World is God, 87 ; The Joy of Sat-sang, 87 ; The object of Confession is different, 89 ; An Inner Meaning, 90 ; Problems of Theology, 90 ; The Absolute and Relative View-points, 92 ; An Astounding Assertion, 92 ; Separateness only apparent, 93 ; Ignorance has no reality, 94 ; Religious training for children 94 ; Repeat Mantra with Love, 97 ; The Effect of Music, 98 ; Don't put the cart before the horse, 99 ; Grace is everything, 100 ; Pride of Sadhana is an obstacle, 101 ; The Example of Viswamitra, 101 ; God is only for the humblest, 102 ; Discipline to keep up God-remembrance, 103 ; Remembrance comes by Grace, 104 ; God-madness ensures remembrance, 105 ; How to drive out the ego-sense, 105 ; Jnana destroys Karma, 106 ; The Essence of Ramdas' Message, 108 ; Animals too have souls, 108 ; Everyone must reach the goal, 110 ; Civilised savages ! 110 ; Differences in Animal intelligence, 111 ; What is Intuition, 112 ; Differences between working of intellect and intuition, 112 ; Examples of Martyrdom, 113 ; Oral and Likhit Japa compared, 115 ; All Mantras have same Power, 116 ; Use of Rosary in Japa, 117 ; Caution about Pranayama, 118 ; Evolution and Retrogression, 119 ; Mental defects no bar to evolution, 120 ; The State of Perfect Equanimity, 120 ; Practice is necessary 121 ; Blessings, 122.

GERMANY

FRANKFURT

At the residence of Dr. Gunter Zuhlsdorf

6th September 1954

123

What is Vedanta ? 123 ; Power of Ram Mantra, 124 ; Steps to God-realisation, 126 ; God must make us work hard for His Vision, 127 ; Om Mani Padme Hum, 129 ; Ramdas' contact with Ramana Maharshi, 130 ; There is only One, 131.

REUTLINGEN

Office of "Bom Veriag", Pfullingen

7th September 1954

132

Ramdas loves the whole world, 132 ; Vegetarianism, 132 ; Love animals, 133 ; Kriya Yoga, 133 ; 'The Spiritual Sun rises in Asia', 133 ; Message to Germans, 134 ; Spiritual Awakening in Germany, 135.

At Park Hotel, Reutlingen

A lady in distress, 136.

MUNICH

Meeting arranged by Mr. Eduard Ullmann

8th September 1954

139

Way to God-vision, 139 ; Bhakti Yoga and Kundalini Yoga, 143 ; Merit or Grace, 145.

At the residence of Mr. Eduard Ullmann

9th September 1954

147

Kundalini Yoga and Posture, 147 ; God is greater than His law, 148 ; Nirvana and Moksha are the same, 149 ; Jesus taught Bhakti, 150 ; Worship God everyday, 150 ; What is Kriya Yoga ? 151 ; Priests and war, 151 ; Bhakti, 152 ; Mantra Japa, 154 ; Give us the Love of your Heart, 155.

10th September 1954

156

Reblitz turns Sannyasin, 156.

FRANCE

ST. LEU-LA-FORET

At the residence of Mrs. Vera Landowska

11th September 1954

No peace without God, 160 ; The soul and God are one, 160 ; Divine Name is all-sufficient, 161 ; Mere reading

CONTENTS

xi

Page

of books will not do, 161 ; Do not starve the Soul, 163 ; Methods of Sri Aurobindo and Ramdas are similar, 164 ; Do Japa with Love and Joy, 166 ; Stick to one Ishta, 166 ; Transcend Good and Evil, 167 ; Matter is Spirit, 167 ; Remove the screen and know you are He, 168 ; Desire to be desireless, 169 ; A Story, 170 ; On Gandhiji's death, 175 , Our duty is to help, 175 ; Give no thought to the past, 176.

PARIS

Conversation with Le Rev. Pere Bruno De Jesus Maria, 51
Rue Scheffer.

11th September 1954

179

All religions lead to God, 179 ; Prayer, a heart-to-heart contact with God, 181 ; Solitude, an aid to communion with God, 182 ; Combine work with worship, 183 ; Prayer, 184 ; When God holds you, you do not fall, 185 ; The Supreme Sacrifice of Christ, 187 ; We can become like Christ, 189 ; Samadhi experience indescribable, 189 ; Is Maharshi not a Jnana Yogi ? 190 ; Name of God brings purity and peace, 191 ; Ramdas is an optimist, 193 ; Brahmacharya, 193 ; Life in Anandashram, 199 ; Mother Krishnabai, 201 ; Miracle and conversion, 202 ; Saints love animals, 203 ; Need for food regimen, 204 ; Obscure night of the Soul, 205 ; Way of love is the best, 207.

ST. LEU-LA-FORET

12th September 1954

208

"Am I still in a dream ?" 208 ; A Saint is a wish-fulfilling Tree, 208 ; God appears in the form devotee gives him, 210 ; Pray for Universal Vision, 210 ; Ways of Grace are mysterious, 211 ; The Guru never gives up the disciple, 212 ; Guru can come in different forms, 214 ;

"I live in Eternity," 216 ; Guru Dattatreya, 217 ; A story, 219 ; Nirvana and Atma Jnana, 221 ; Self-realisation leads to universal service, 221 ; Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, 222.

12th September 1954

226

Devotion and Divine Name, 226 ; Japa is meditation, 230 ; Mantra initiation from a Guru, 231 ; Guru is the Awakener, 232 ; Do not merely worship the signpost, 233 ; The 'Om' Mantra, 234 ; Guru alone can guide you, not books, 235 ; Ramdas' experience, 235 ; Peace within means Peace without, 236 ; Dedicate all actions to God 238 ; Intuition is Voice of God, 238 ; The Determining factor is inner sign, 239 ; Buddha's way, 240 ; Food first, then God, 241 ; The Simple Path, 241 ; Kripa first and last, 242.

13th September 1954

243

Love never fails, 243 ; All work done in a Spiritual sense is Divine, 244 ; Home atmosphere is congenial for children, 245 ; Like parents, like children, 246 ; Our effort is of no avail, 248 ; Serve parents as God, 249 ; Satsang and Ramnam heal all sorrows, 250 ; Communication with the dead is an obstacle, 254 ; Probe not into the past or the future, 255 ; Psychology, 256 ; No taint of sex in Divine Love, 257 ; Brahman is sexless, 259 ; Saint Mira Bai, 259 ; The Eternal is beyond all mental states, 260 ; Atman the Absolute is Brahman, 261 ; We worship Gods for material benefits, 262 ; Sankhya, Vedanta and Tantra, 263 ; Ours is to attain freedom and not to speculate, 265 ; Use tried remedies, 266 ; Be aware that you are ever in Bliss, 266 ; An illustration, 268 ; Meditation gives joy and not pain, 268 ; Rise above lights and visions and find the Light of Lights, 269 ; All mystics have the same experience, 271.

CONTENTS

xiii

*Page**14th September 1954*

273

Personal and Impersonal Vision of God, 273 ; Love is its own Reward, 275 ; Discrimination and self-surrender, 276 ; Reason should guide until Intuition dawns, 277 ; Christ's parable, 278 ; Birth or Caste no criterion for Spiritual Perfection, 279 ; Significance of Krishna's discourse on the Battle-field, 280 ; Care of the body before and after God-realisation, 280 ; A Story, 282 ; Feeling for the suffering of others is a gift of God, 283 ; We fight because we know not God is Love, 285 ; Good and bad dreams, 286 ; Every situation is as God wills, 286 ; Death and life relate only to the body, 287 ; Our likes and dislikes in this life governed by relationship in the previous life, 287 ; Hallucination vs. Spiritual Vision, 289 ; In Samadhi you are happiness itself, 290 ; For Liberation transcend the Gunas, 290 ; A Story, 291.

111

Page
272

1. The first part of the book is devoted to a general survey of the history of the Indian people. It is a very interesting and well-written account of the various stages of Indian civilization, from the earliest times to the present day. The author's knowledge of Indian history is very extensive, and his treatment of the subject is very clear and concise.

2. The second part of the book is devoted to a detailed study of the various religions and philosophies of India. It is a very interesting and well-written account of the various stages of Indian civilization, from the earliest times to the present day. The author's knowledge of Indian history is very extensive, and his treatment of the subject is very clear and concise.

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SWITZERLAND

GENEVA,

1st September 1954.

IS THE WORLD UNREAL ?

Questioner : India teaches us that we live in the unreal, in a dream, and Maya hides the Reality from us. When my brother is hungry and his family is without a house, how can I believe that the enormous suffering in all fields of nature — from the vegetable to the human — is unreal ?

Ramdas : There is some confusion of ideas in your question. First of all, we have to know what you mean by "unreal". Do you mean "impermanent" or "illusory" ? When we say the world is an "illusion", it means that the world seems to exist, but does not really exist. If it is taken to be "impermanent", then also we know that impermanent things are incapable of giving us real happiness and peace. Attachment to impermanent things will give us only impermanent happiness. Only if we attach ourselves to the permanent, we shall have permanent happiness. Whatever we see before us is subject to change and ultimate destruction. This is known to every one of us from the experience we have gained in this life.

THREE STEPS TO TRUTH

Now the question is, in order to free ourselves from our attachment to this unreal — in the sense that it is impermanent — what have we to do ? The way has

been shown by sages, — we should develop compassion towards all creatures, so, whenever we see misery anywhere, we have to go to the relief of the people who are suffering, and find our oneness with those people through service done to them. It is not possible to realise the Truth by merely saying that the world is unreal and that Truth alone is real. We have to experience the Truth, and to get such experience, acts of love, mercy, relief and compassion are essential. Ramdas will tell you the three necessary things to be done in order to realise the Truth, that is, to transcend our attachment to the perishables.

The first step is Nishkama Karma or selfless service. Such acts are done for the relief of the sufferers without expecting anything in return. When we see suffering, we must rush to relieve it, as much as it is in our power to do so. This is Nishkama Karma, by which our mind gets purified. The second step is Japa. The word 'Upasana' in Sanskrit means 'to sit near God'. How can we sit near God? By remembering Him constantly. We can remember Him constantly only by taking His holy name. This is called Japa. By doing Japa we feel conscious that we are near God. This is the way to feel the presence of God. The third step is contact of a saint.

The first two practices go to purify our mind; thereafter we are ready to receive the influence of a great sage and imbibe his teachings and finally get ourselves awakened within. The process here is, listening to the spiritual advice given to us by the great saint and then recollecting or revolving it in the mind

constantly until it is fixed in it. When this is done, the veil of ignorance between us and God, which makes us believe that we are different from Him, is destroyed. That very instant we realise that we are the Supreme Truth that resides in the hearts of all beings and creatures, and that Truth and God are not different. This is the way to realise God.

THE WORLD IS NOT AN ILLUSION

In the early stages of our attempt for realising the ultimate Reality, it is essential that we should try to relieve the distress of those who are about us. We are not to sit with folded hands, doing nothing for them. After God-realisation also, we do not keep idle. Spontaneously, our whole life will be dedicated to the service of humanity. We will not take humanity as illusion or non-existent. The illusion or ignorance consists in our not knowing that we are the eternal Reality. There is a veil between us and the Reality. That veil of illusion has to be rent asunder by the practices just now enumerated. The world is not an illusion. Very often people make the mistake of thinking that it is.

BE A LIGHT UNTO OTHERS

After piercing the veil and realising God, we should live and move amidst all peoples as a light unto them and dedicate our whole life as a flower laid at the altar of God in the shape of service to the distressed and suffering humanity. This is the main object of our life. If we are ego-less we can do this service in the

best manner possible. The divine power can work through us only in this state. We are not merely the bodies, a bundle of the senses and mind, but we are the supreme Spirit, — free, blissful, all-pervading and eternal.

THE DIFFERENCE

The difference between a man who has realised God and a man who has not realised God is this. He who has not realised God thinks that he lives only in one body and so attends to the requirements of that body alone whereas the man who has realised God knows that he is residing in all bodies and so is concerned with supplying the wants of all of them, especially those who are denied the usual necessities such as food and clothing. Whenever a realised soul sees a person who is ill-clad or ill-fed, his heart goes out to him and he sees to it that the person is well-clad and well-fed, just as he clads and feeds himself, because now all bodies are his, as he knows he is not dwelling merely in one body. This is what it is to be God-realised, to have the Universal Vision.

HOW TO CONQUER KARMA ?

Q: Does the knowledge of Karma theory make it easier for us to pass through sufferings ?

Ramdas: The Karma theory is based upon the principle of cause and effect. As we sow, so we reap. If we had done good deeds in the past, we reap good fruits now. If we had done bad deeds, we reap bad fruits. Knowing this, we have to suffer cheerfully for

whatever bad things we did in the past, and in the light of the present experience, turn over a new leaf and do only good deeds, so that we may reap good fruits in the future. In that way we can evolve steadily and reach the Divine by becoming absolutely good.

We can unmake what we have made, by living an utterly righteous life, in the thought of God. This is not easy. Although we know that certain actions we do are not good for us, we are prone to do them again and again, as we are too weak to resist temptations. We are not able to control the mind. At such times, if we pray to God to give us the needed strength, He comes to our rescue and His grace releases us from the thralldom of Karma or action and takes us to Himself. Thus, Karma is conquered and the ego is vanquished.

Q : Is it really possible to get rid of past Karma in one life ?

Ramdas : When you resign yourself to the will of God and take everything as happening by His will, you are not bound by any Karma. Whatever happens, you take it as willed by God and remain perfectly calm, unaffected and cheerful—whether you meet with failure or success in life, whether people praise you or blame you, whether you make gains or incur losses. In all conditions, you can keep a perfectly tranquil mind since your surrender to God is complete.

Good and evil that you see outside are the projections of your own mind. In fact, there is no such thing as evil. Good and evil are relative terms. Any loss which is considered to be bad by you may prove

to be good, as it may take you nearer to God. God gives you such situations for your good, so that you may remember Him, turn your mind towards Him and realise your union with Him, which is the end and aim of this life. All other ambitions are for the baubles of the world which are transitory. They cannot give you lasting peace and happiness. You know you did not bring those things with you when you came here, and you cannot take them with you when you depart from this life.

When you have this realisation, Karma does not at all affect you. You are free from the thralldom of Karma. Now there is no question of past and future for you. You live every moment in a state of perfect surrender to Him, and you enjoy nothing but happiness, peace and joy in all situations, whether pleasant or unpleasant, favourable or unfavourable, because these are only mental states or attitudes. There is surely nothing wrong anywhere. There is a saying "Good or evil, thinking makes it so". You are now a free and liberated soul facing all situations cheerfully, relying on God.

FREEDOM IS SURRENDER

Q : If we are entirely in the hands of God, how can we be free ? We cannot be free at all. Why should we be told we have to do good ? It is true we may be bound by our past Karma, but we may be free to a certain extent to act.

Ramdas : Utter freedom lies in the surrender to the will of God. When we surrender ourselves to the

objects of the senses or the ego, we are in bondage. Freedom consists in handing ourselves over to God.

Q : Which means we are not free, because we depend on God and God makes us do only what He wants.

Ramdas : When we surrender ourselves to God, there is no such thing as good or bad, because God does everything for our supreme good. We will have a mountain of patience in every situation. We will never blame or accuse anybody and we will be as free and cheerful as a child on the lap of the mother. When the child is not on the lap of the mother, it feels unhappy. The moment it goes to the mother, it is free and cheerful and it feels one with the mother because of the love that exists between the mother and the child. Similarly, the devotee who has surrendered himself to God feels his union with God through love. In this state he enjoys the bliss of perfect freedom.

Generally what we mean by freedom is only freedom so far as the physical bondage is concerned. In the case of master and his slave, we know the slave is under the domination of the master and is in bondage. But that is not the case here. It is rightly said that a slave of God is free, but a slave of man is bound. When we become the children of the Divine Father, or Divine Mother, knowing at the same time that we and He are one in Spirit, we enjoy a felicity and freedom that passeth understanding.

FREEDOM IN SERVICE

This is supreme freedom. Freedom is a state to be enjoyed and not merely to be attained. If we lose

ourselves in God, of course we are completely liberated. But, who is there to enjoy the freedom? There must be somebody to enjoy the bliss of this union. If we become sugar itself, how can we enjoy the sweetness of it? Knowing that we are sugar, let us eat sugar. The position of a servant of God who knows that he and his Master are one, and still remains the servant of the Master, is really enviable. This is what in Hindu philosophy they call Visishta-Adwaita. It is not pure Adwaita, or Monism, but qualified Monism. Here, there is a state of Dwaita and Adwaita at once.

This cannot be easily comprehended, but it is true all the same. It is an attitude towards God in which we become one with Him and still enjoy His association and service. In that service there is absolute freedom and no bondage. We find by experience that we are bound by our senses and our desire for position, wealth and honour. This bondage brings us nothing but pain, misery and fear. But the servant of God is ever cheerful, happy and fearless and enjoys unending bliss.

Q: When you say that in order to taste sugar we should not become sugar, does it not mean that in order to enjoy what is good we should remain bad?

Ramdas: If we are bad, we do not get sugar at all.

THE ESSENTIALS IN JAPA YOGA

Q: I should like to hear from Swamiji more about Japa Yoga, say, about the conditions of Japa Yoga.

Ramdas: Japa means constant repetition of God's name. The chief condition necessary for Japa Yoga is a keen aspiration to know and realise God. Given this,

the person who is on the spiritual path will go on taking His name with all love and joy. By so doing he will thoroughly purify his mind and make it transparent so that God within him may shine forth and absorb him into His all-pervading, all transcendent being of splendour, peace, power and wisdom. So, a keen aspiration to realise God is the only necessary condition.

Q : What is the sense in constantly repeating the name of God, as every religion asks us to do ? How can it succeed if we do nothing and ask for nothing ?

Ramdas : By constantly repeating the name of God who resides in our heart, gradually we become conscious of Him. That consciousness purifies our heart, fills our mind and senses with a strange and powerful light of the Divine, which eradicates all the low desires lurking within us. Ultimately, we become perfectly conscious that God is dwelling within us. This is the greatest gain. By such remembrance we become aware of His light and His power within us.

FROM INTELLECTUAL ACCEPTANCE TO EXPERIENCE

Q : When we repeat the name of God, should we do it with the sense that we are going nearer to God, or should we do so in a sense of unity with God and with the world, or should we do so in an attitude of surrender to God, or should we unite all the three ?

Ramdas : Ramdas has already said that when we are repeating the name of God we must be conscious that we are repeating the name of One who is within us, who is our true being and existence. We must

keep this central fact in our mind when taking His name. Then the practice will gradually make us aware of His existence within us. At the beginning we are not aware of this, but we intellectually accept the idea that God dwells within us and we take His name. The association with Him is there mentally, and it grows into an experience when we actually feel His presence, by constantly hammering into the mind that God whom we aspire to see is within us and that the name we repeat is His name.

The object of repeating the Name is to purify the mind and thereby get the awareness of Him within us. God then becomes not a matter of mere intellectual acceptance but an object of intimate and close experience. Because our communion with Him through the Name becomes so perfect that, gradually, we lose the distinction between ourselves and Him and, freed from all desires and outgoing tendencies, find union with Him. We then realise that the light of God is nothing but the light that comes from our own soul. Actually, when the light dawns on us, we cannot but see Him everywhere. As we become aware of Him within us, we become conscious of Him without us also. We feel His presence everywhere. We see a strange all-pervading light wherein all beings and creatures seem to be so many bubbles appearing and disappearing.

THROUGH FORMS TO THE FORMLESS

Q: Does the Mantra bind us down to one particular manifestation of Divinity? For example, if we take the Mantra of Krishna, does it not bind us to Krishna only?

Ramdas : For the time being, for the sake of concentration you must be attached to one form or manifestation of God. That Ishta, the adored Deity of yours, on your surrendering yourself to Him, takes you beyond name and form and makes you realise the all-pervading, infinite and eternal existence of God. When you want to climb upstairs, you require some means to do so — a rope, a flight of steps or a lift. So long as you are climbing by the help of a rope, you have not to think about the staircase, or any other means. For the time being, for you the rope is the only way which takes you up. Some others may use either the staircase or the lift. Though going by different means, all reach the same upper floor at the end and meet there. When they reach the destination, they all give up the rope, the staircase, or the lift, as the case may be. These aids are of no significance to them, after reaching the goal. So, Krishna's name and form are meditated upon only for attaining the impersonal Krishna who is residing in our hearts and pervading everywhere. He has assumed a form for the devotees to concentrate upon. By its help the devotees who have accepted that name and form as their guide will be raised beyond them into his vast, infinite, unmanifest existence. It is only then that the soul attains liberation and peace.

HOW TO DISSOLVE THE EGO

Q : Can we get some practical advice to get rid of pride and attain true humility? Very often, we make efforts to put down pride and we often are proud at

having made the very effort to get rid of pride. How can it be got rid of ?

Ramdas : The best way to get rid of pride is to compare ourselves with God. If we think constantly of the glories, greatness, and magnificence of God, our ego-sense naturally ceases to assert itself and gradually dwindles into nothing. The moment we forget Him, the ego comes up and makes us say that we are doing everything, that we are clever, and so on. So, if we keep our mind engaged in constant thought of God, there is no room for the ego to exist. It is not by fighting darkness that you make it disappear but by bringing in light. So, by bringing into the mind the greatness, omnipresence, omniscience, infinity and eternity of God, automatically, the ego-sense disappears as it cannot stand before the glory of God.

BE AWARE OF THE PURPOSE OF JAPA

Q : Can the repetition of Mantra not be an obstacle so far as it may become automatic and mechanical and hide from us the real path ?

Ramdas : In that case we do not know why we are repeating the Mantra. What is the aim ? To get our mind purified by constant remembrance of God. Taking God's name, doing Japa, means that we are trying to become conscious of God, because the Mantra, the Name, stands for God. When we tune ourselves with the Name, we tune ourselves with God. That is the purpose of repeating the Mantra ; without it the repetition becomes merely mechanical and does not help us in any way. We must knowingly repeat

the Mantra and become conscious of God by understanding the object of such repetition.

COMMUNE WITH GOD DAILY

Q : Can you help those of us who are caught in the whirlpool of work so much that we are not conscious of the presence of God ?

Ramdas : We do not work the whole day long. There are some hours of leisure. Out of these hours, after spending some time for the necessities of life, outside the field of daily work, some period may be devoted exclusively for remembering God and getting the necessary communion and contact with Him. By practising like this from day to day, we shall be able to develop a nature in which there will be always peace, even when we are active in our daily routine. Remembrance of God in that state becomes the background to all external activity. Consciousness of God will then be always with us and we get the peace which passeth understanding. Otherwise we are caught in the whirlpool of work we are doing every day and lose ourselves in it so much so that we entirely forget God. We become only machines turning out a certain amount of work and exhausting ourselves. As a result the mind becomes restless, care-worn and unbalanced. So, during our leisure hours, we must devote some time to retire within ourselves and commune with the Divine by remembering Him through prayer and meditation. Gradually we feel so much joy in the work that we never feel fatigued. We now know that the work we are doing is a dedication to

the Divine, because we become conscious that we are doing the work not by our will and power, but by the will and power of the Divine.

RAMDAS' EXPERIENCE

Q : Would it be possible for us to hear you chant your Mantra and say something about its significance ?

Ramdas : (After chanting the Mantra for some time) The Mantra which Ramdas was repeating was "Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram". He received this Mantra from his Guru, who was none other than his father. After the Mantra was received, Ramdas felt that it took complete possession of him. It was not that he possessed the Mantra, but the Mantra possessed him. He was constantly repeating it and in that repetition from the very start, he felt absolute peace and joy. It was all due to God's grace, because, without His grace, our mind does not turn towards Him. Without our mind turning towards God, His name will not taste sweet to us, or prove beneficial to us. Our mind will be wandering in many directions if we repeat the Name mechanically. The mind must be attuned to the name of God and through the Name we must attain that inner consciousness or awareness of the Divine. We must also feel His presence everywhere. This is the end that we have to attain.

This Mantra was working in Ramdas' mind continuously until the mind became luminous and peaceful and all its impurities were completely eradicated. Ramdas has seen so many persons struggling on the path of God-realisation or God-vision,

but they have not been able to root out the desires of their lower nature. From Ramdas' experience, he can boldly say that by the repetition of Mantra given to you by a Guru you can make your mind absolutely pure like a crystal. Purity of mind is essential for God-vision. You must be absolutely honest, straightforward and free from lust, greed and wrath. Then only God can be yours. You can realise Him, experience Him, live, move and have your being in Him at all times.

NEED FOR FAITH AND LOVE

This supremely beatific state can be attained by the power of the Name if only you would repeat it with all love and faith. It is God's name that you are repeating. You should not forget this fact. God is all mercy, all love, all joy, all wisdom and all peace. Be conscious always that you are repeating His name and it is bound to purify you and remove all restlessness of mind. Repeat the Mantra and make the mind like a limpid pool without any disturbance, without any dirt in it. In that pool the Divine light from within shines out and you are filled with the ecstasy of your union with the Divine. This is all brought about by the power of the Mantra.

In the early days, when Ramdas was repeating the Mantra people nearby took him to be mad, because he had no other thought than that of God, no talk but of God. Day and night he was immersed in the intoxication which made him appear like one living in an abnormal state of mind. His face was ever lit with a

smile which was not feigned, which did not come from anything gained from outside, but was revealed from the heart and appeared on the face. He could not but smile, he could not but be happy, because he was in the grip of that Mantra which stood for him as God Himself.

So Ramdas has been telling friends who come to him that God and His name are not different. Either through His name or through His form, you can achieve a state of perfect bliss and peace. Can you describe in words what that divine joy and peace is? No. It is only through experience that you know it.

Q : When no specific Mantra has been given to us, what should we do?

Ramdas : Take any name of God you like and repeat it always.

Q . If we repeat such a name which we have taken ourselves with faith and devotion, is it likely to lead us to some saint who will give us the Mantra?

Ramdas : That is what happens often and that is how Ramdas also got his initiation from his Guru. Before he got the initiation he was repeating 'Ram, Ram.' After some time the Guru himself came to him and initiated him with the Ram Mantra.

Q : Are there any special conditions for repeating the Mantra?

Ramdas : The chief condition is our surrender to Him. Surrender means feeling and saying : "O God, I am nothing ; you are everything". With this attitude towards Him if you repeat His name, your mind will be instantly still and you will experience immediate peace.

If such an attitude of surrender is not possible at once, you may look upon God as your Master and consider yourself to be His servant, and then remember the Master incessantly, so that by His light and grace you may be liberated from the clutches of the ego which is responsible for your keeping away from the Master and making you feel the sense of doership in every action. So this relationship with God is very helpful in receiving His grace and the power that flows from the Grace is sure to elevate you and fill you with His peace and power.

Q: When we want to repeat the Name which we have chosen for ourselves, should we repeat that Name alone, or should we have the whole phrase in which the Name is set?

Ramdas: You may repeat it whichever way you like. The only thing is, by repeating the Name or Mantra, you must tune your mind with God and commune with Him. If that is not done, the repetition of any Mantra will not be of use.

SATTWIC FOOD NECESSARY

Q: Is repetition of the Name less efficient if we take Tamasic food?

Ramdas: Tamasic food is not at all helpful for repetition of the Name. When the mind is like a whirlpool, it refuses to take the Name or tune itself with God. So we must take only what in Sanskrit is called Sattwic food, free from irritating ingredients such as chillies, garlic, meat, onions, etc. Milk, fruits, bread, etc., come under the category of Sattwic food. So it

is better to regulate our diet and see that we take harmless food, pure vegetarian food. There are many families, Ramdas has seen, even in Europe and India, that have taken to pure vegetarian diet and they have found that their minds were easily brought under control.

Many people eating only pure vegetarian food are yet very violent in nature and given to doing undesirable things. So, side by side with diet restrictions, we must have thought of God, prayers and meditations. If you simply take Sattwic food and do only very little spiritual practices, you cannot get real benefit. Food restrictions are only a means to an end and not an end in themselves. Many vegetarians take pride in thinking themselves to be superior to others. This mentality must go. We must be kind and tolerant towards everybody. For ourselves, we must see that we are as humble as possible and our minds are kept calm and pure and engaged in constant contemplation of God.

AIDS TO SADHANA

How exactly should this be done? For spiritual practice, three things are considered to be very important. First, the society or company of pure souls — pure are those who are in constant communion with God — saintly souls and devotees who aspire to realise Him. Their company is elevating. If you keep company or friendship with people who are immersed in worldly desires and never think of God, it is detrimental to your spiritual progress. So you should avoid such

company as far as possible. It may not be possible for you to avoid such company entirely in the work-a-day world, but you must as far as possible avoid associating with them, and at the same time be tolerant and kind to them. Secondly, pure food. Pure food helps you to keep your mind always calm. Thirdly, pure action. Pure action is that which is done in a selfless spirit, in relieving the distress of others. You must try to relieve the distress of those who are in trouble and need help, by developing in your heart compassion and kindness.

MEANING OF LOVE OF GOD

If you are merciful to others, God will be merciful to you. It is said that we cannot truly love God unless we love our brethren. The test of your love for God is your love for all beings. This is essential for your spiritual progress. Selfless action, done without any desire for result and out of pure love and compassion, elevates and ennobles you and brings you very near to God. There is a saying: "When a man says he has love for God and, does not love his neighbour, he is a liar." It means, the test of your love for God is how you move with your fellow-beings,—whether you are forgiving, loving and helpful. The more you sacrifice yourself for the good of others, the nearer God comes to you. It is not that you go to Him, but He comes to you and reveals Himself in all His splendour in your heart. The thing that pleases Him most is your love for others. God is the Divine Parent and we are all His children.

Q : In the best interests of an orphan child I had to hurt the feelings of my mother. How can I please her ?

Ramdas : What you did for the orphan child is in Ramdas' opinion perfectly right. Now you have to bring round your mother and give her peace. For this you must shower all your love on her, be extremely kind to her, and do every service possible for her and thus gradually bring her round to your way of thinking with regard to that child. Ultimately, your mother is bound to feel that what you did in regard to the child was right. There would be harmony between you and your mother. Meanwhile Ramdas can also prescribe one more thing, that is, constant remembrance of God. You must do this, so that your mental purity may reflect on the mother and remove all her doubts and worries and there may be peace and harmony in the family. May God in His mercy bring this about ! This is Ramdas' earnest prayer.

GOD IS THE DOCTOR OF DOCTORS

Q : A young man of 29, with a tumour in the brain, asked me how he can really thank God in the state in which he is. I did not know what to reply.

Ramdas : It is not that he should thank God for what he is, but pray to God in that situation that his mind may dwell in Him, and whatever happens to his body be left to God in implicit surrender to Him. Disease has come not only to him. He has not been singled out for it. There are so many who have been stricken with physical and mental diseases. The mind

is filled with so many low, grovelling desires. In this state the mind is said to be highly diseased. Just as there is a tumour, cancer or some other disease of the body, so also there are diseases of the mind. These must be removed first and this can be done only by thinking of God and by surrendering ourselves to Him. When death comes near to us, we are frightened. It is that fear that makes us take refuge in Him.

Difficulties help in bringing us nearer to God. They may be either physical, mental or circumstantial. There are so many who would have forgotten God and be immersed in worldly pleasures, doing many evil things, had not some trouble turned their minds towards God. They say: "O God, You have brought this tribulation on me in order to draw my mind towards You."

In this case, if the young man takes the Name and remembers God, leaving his malady to His decision, he can make himself happy. Very often, by God's grace, incurable diseases get cured. So, let this young man believe in God and think of Him. By His grace he will be cured of his trouble, however difficult it may appear to be in the eyes of the doctors. The Doctor of Doctors is God. He can cure people of the worst of diseases when He wills. Let the young man remember Him constantly and pray to Him to give him peace and joy.

HOW TO AVOID CONFLICT BETWEEN RELIGIONS

Q: Does the multiplicity of religions not arise from the fact that Christ is considered only as a person

instead of being considered as Christ-consciousness which shines through all saints and all individuals ?

Ramdas : Adherence to one divine personality very often deteriorates into creeds and cults. That should not be. It is so because we take him only to be a person and not the Cosmic Truth, not as God Himself manifest in flesh and blood. If we use our devotion to such a great personality for transcending the personal and realising the impersonal aspect of that manifestation, there should be no clash of religions. In fact, then there will be no religious differences whatsoever.

Now, as it is, religions have become so many walls that segregate or separate us from one another. If any religion becomes the cause of accentuating our differences and creating barriers amongst ourselves, it does not serve the purpose. The purpose of religion is to eliminate the ego-sense, so that we can love the whole of humanity as we love our own family. Love of family grows into love of a community or creed, and we are encased in that small group and look upon people outside it as entirely different from us. This creation of separate folds has produced clash, dissension and chaos.

What we must do is to look upon all the great Teachers of the world as manifestations or incarnations of the one Divine, who is beyond all names and forms. To whatever personality we may give our loyalty and adoration as our spiritual help and guide, we must look upon him not merely as a person, but also as the transcendent, all-pervading Truth.

UNIVERSALITY OF ALL TEACHERS

Q : Christ said : "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

Ramdas : Because he belonged to the whole universe. All humanity was dear to him. That is Christ-Consciousness. Christ had no particular place to call his own. That is why he said he had no place for rest. If he owned anything, it was the whole universe. He did not confine himself to any one house or country. He belonged to all countries and all times. His vision was universal, so vast and so comprehensive that all beings and creatures were included in it, and he loved them equally. He said : "Love thy neighbour as thyself." The neighbour may be good, bad or indifferent, and may belong to your own sect or any other. In the Hindu scriptures it is said : "See God in all beings and love them"—be they good, bad or indifferent. Mohammed preached universal brotherhood. He said : "You are all children of one Parent and therefore must live with each other like brothers and sisters." This is the vision he held before us. These great Teachers taught us the same truth. But forgetting that, we have formed many distinctions and barriers among ourselves and have started hating each other. There is discord instead of unity. There is hate instead of love. While these great Teachers stood for unity, their followers are fighting among themselves and creating disunity. This state of affairs is, indeed, most deplorable.

Q : Christ said : "It is only through Me that you can reach the Father in Heaven."

Ramdas : When he spoke like that, He did not speak as an individual, but as the Cosmic Truth. This Cosmic Truth is revealed in all the great Teachers also. Another Teacher of the same spiritual status has said the same thing and it also holds good. Because, it is not from the individual standpoint that these great Teachers speak but as manifestations of the Cosmic Reality, as God Himself. This God is revealed in the great Teachers of every faith or country. Through them, you attain the Cosmic Truth. In the Bhagavad Gita it is said : "Abandoning all other paths come to ME alone for shelter, and I shall liberate thee from all sins." These words were uttered by Sri Krishna. It fits him also to say what Jesus said. That "I" which Jesus used and this "I" which Krishna used are one and the same. Their "I" is impersonal and universal. It relates to the Cosmic Life and Cosmic Truth of which both Jesus and Krishna are manifestations in human form for teaching humanity the way that leads to that Truth.

OM TAT SAT

Q : There is the Trinity of "Sat, Tat, and Om" relating to Father, Son and the Holy Ghost. Can you tell us something about this ?

Ramdas : This is a very deep question and it will take a very long time to explain how they compare. We must go very deep into these words, especially the definition of these words "Sat, Tat and Om". It should be "Om, Tat, Sat". We shall reserve this for tomorrow, if God wills. Ramdas does not see any similarity

SWITZERLAND

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between "Om Tat Sat" on the one hand, and "Father, Son and Holy Ghost" on the other. This much we can say at present, because they do not correspond to each other.

SUFFERING FOR SELF-PURIFICATION AND FOR REDEMPTION OF OTHERS

Q : The problem of suffering seems to play a much larger part amongst the Christians than amongst the Hindus. Here we think Christ died on the Cross for the redemption of mankind.

Ramdas : The great incarnations come to the world to teach humanity the various ways of realising God. They as well as saints suffer for the redemption of humanity. But suffering in the case of Sadhakas or novices is a necessary help to attain self-purification. Christ suffered on the Cross for the sake of humanity and those who believed in Him are purified through His suffering. So Jesus taught the world the way to reach God by the supreme sacrifice of His life. This is how Ramdas understands Christ's suffering on the Cross. But when we suffer for the sake of others by bearing our own Cross we act as Christ did.

Suffering is not a thing to be afraid of, or evaded. It comes to us as a Godsend, for our purification. Our life becomes truly blessed when we remember Him in our sufferings and turn our mind towards Him. This kind of suffering for the sake of self-purification and receiving the resultant grace of God has been evident even in Hinduism. In the Bhakti Yoga, suffering is not to be avoided. Whenever suffering comes, the devotees

accept it cheerfully as sent by God for their good. While suffering, they remember Him constantly. Remembrance helps them to rise above the body consciousness. Ultimately, they dwell in the Divine completely. This is why followers of the Bhakti Yoga welcome suffering as coming from God, whom they look upon as all mercy and kindness. The devotee never prays that the difficulties or sufferings should be removed. Sometimes he asks for more and more suffering. He says: "O God, make me suffer more and more so that my mind may always dwell in You. I remember You only when I suffer".

Kunti Devi, the mother of the Pandavas, was once in great distress. Then she remembered Sri Krishna constantly and the remembrance gave her rare joy. Suffering was no suffering for her as her mind was ever bathing in peace by communion with Him. When Krishna appeared before her and offered to grant her a boon, she said: "Lord, give me more and more suffering, because suffering makes me remember You".

Just as manure helps the growth of a plant, suffering helps us to progress on the spiritual path. When suffering comes to us, we must bear it patiently and make the best use of it for self-purification and the ultimate realisation of God.

RAMDAS' VISIONS

Jean Herbert : The Father has nothing special to ask you, but he only remarks, having heard your talks, that they agree well with our Books and also with our theological studies. These young men would like to

hear something about your personal experience of Christ. Of course, for Christians it is extremely interesting. May we hear something about it ?

Ramdas : From his school days Ramdas had received inspiration from Christ because he was taught Bible in the school. From that time he has entertained a very high admiration for him. His teachings cast a spell, as it were, on him. He had high veneration also for other incarnations such as Krishna, Rama, Buddha and great saints. When the new life came to Ramdas he felt that he was mysteriously influenced by Christ, Krishna and Buddha. He used to read their teachings and derive invaluable help from them. God in his inscrutable way gave him the visions of Krishna, Buddha and Christ. These three great Teachers held out before him that absolute purity in thought, word and deed is essential for knowing and realising God. They guided and inspired Ramdas when he took refuge in them.

THE VISION OF CHRIST

Now, Ramdas will describe briefly the vision he had of Christ in a cave on the Himalayas. He was on fast for five days and was taking only water of the Ganges river flowing nearby. He was also keeping vigil day and night, thinking of God. In this cave no light was kept at night. One midnight he suddenly found the cave flooded with a strange light. Ramdas was sitting with his eyes closed. The powerful light struck his eyes and he opened them. He beheld before him sitting, a radiant figure. Intuitionally he felt it

was Jesus. He was dressed in a long robe of chocolate colour, his locks of hair were falling loose on his shoulders, and his face showed the utmost sweetness and serenity, glowing with divine radiance. What arrested Ramdas' attention were his eyes that sparkled like stars. Seeing those eyes Ramdas was transfixed and went into ecstasies. He cannot describe the joy he felt at that time. The figure before him spoke a few words, but he could not make out the language. This vision lasted, may be, for a few seconds. The result was, till the following morning, Ramdas was lost in a sea of rapture. When Ramdas is describing this vision, he seems to be seeing it even now, because it was so vivid and real.

For Ramdas' attainment of absolute purity, the Grace of Krishna, Buddha and Christ was solely responsible. Their power is, indeed, infinite. They are incarnations of God who walked on this earth for the redemption of humanity. From this, it must be clear to you what Jesus means to Ramdes.

CALL GOD BY ANY NAME

Q: Can you say something about calling the name of Jesus? Is it just like calling any other name of God?

Ramdas: Ramdas does not make any distinction whether God is called by the name of Jesus, Rama or Krishna. The Name is a symbol of God. Christians tell Ramdas that they are taking Jesus' name. Ramdas encourages them to go on with it.

Q: Don't you teach any special way of saying the name of Jesus?

Ramdas : When Christian friends ask Ramdas to give them the name of Jusus, he gives it. There is no particular way of repeating it. There is no difference between one Name and another, because the Name is only a symbol of God. God is speaking through His great incarnations who appeared on the earth in flesh and blood. They all represent God who is beyond name and form.

Is it true that Jesus stands for the personal aspect and Christ for the impersonal aspect of Him, — one is the body and the other the consciousness ; Christ the consciousness which has appeared as Jesus the body ?

Father : That is not according to Roman Catholic theology.

Ramdas : Some people explain it that way.

Father : It is not classical theology. The idea of consciousness does not seem to be quite theological.

Ramdas : They call it Spirit.

Father : Christ was the Truth that manifested Itself in the Divine Peace, that is Peace of God.

THE CHRISTIAN TRINITY

Ramdas : Father, Holy Ghost and Christ : are they not really one ?

Father : Yes, they are one. That is the mystery. Do you have any practice in which you had experience of the Christian Trinity ?

Ramdas : No. But Ramdas knows this much, that they are one, and he does not distinguish between Father, Son and Holy Ghost which, of course, is the Divine Spirit. We have got to fill ourselves with the

Spirit of Christ. Until the Spirit of Christ pours into us, we cannot be fully free from the lower desires and be raised and exalted. Similarly, other Avatars who appear on this earth from time to time also fill us with the Divine Spirit. Although, apparently, there is difference in the forms of the Avatars, essentially, in Spirit they are one, and that Spirit entered into Ramdas. As he completely handed himself over to the Spirit he has been made what he is.

SPIRITUAL GUIDES

Q : We know how important it is to get a Guru who can instruct us and whom we can follow. But with the Christian tradition it is very difficult to find one. We find it in other traditions, but among Christians we can find only one who can be like an adviser, and with whom we cannot have the relationship of disciple and master. Can we pray that we may be taken to another who will be a real Guru, or should we have to remain satisfied with the advice that we may get from our religion ?

Ramdas : Ramdas does not believe that there are no holy persons in the Christian fold who lead a very pure life consecrated to the Divine completely and who radiate the purity, light and peace of the Divine by which the person who comes in contact with them can be influenced and then made to go along the path of God without any hindrance. Such persons can not only advise but also cast a holy influence on the aspirant, awaken him within and guide him spiritually.

Q : In my own individual case, God led me to find some Muslim saint who was able to advise me satisfactorily and guide me. But I do not find anybody within the Christian fold. So, should I pray God to lead me to a Christian, or should I remain under the Muslim saint ?

Ramdas : You should not look upon your Guru, who has given you spiritual guidance, as a Muslim or a Christian. You should take him only as a saint who has found God within him and is guiding you to Him. When you have accepted a Muslim saint you must be obedient to him and consider him as a divine instrument from whom you are ordained to receive the necessary spiritual help. A saint has no caste, creed or colour. A saint is one who is dear to God in whom he has found refuge and is lit up with His light, peace and joy. His contact must prove helpful to you in your spiritual struggle.

Q : That is what I also thought and I am glad you have confirmed it.

Q : Can you do something so that there should be more and more Christians who call on the name of Jesus ?

Ramdas : O yes. Wherever and whenever Ramdas gets an opportunity he is doing it and he will do it.

Q : Thank you, Father.

GENEVA,

2nd September 1954.

OUR HEAVEN AND HELL

Q: What is meant by the last Judgment in the Christian Scriptures?

Ramdas: For Ramdas it may signify only this much, that we are judged by the way we live our life. We condemn ourselves to a state of misery, pain, sorrow and fear by our own bad actions. We lift or exalt ourselves by doing good actions. Ramdas attaches very little significance to it, because it is not possible to conceive that God gives us only one chance of life and then, on the last day of Judgment, decides our future fate. It may only mean that in future we shall be happy or miserable according to the manner in which we lead the present life. If we lead a righteous life remembering God constantly we go towards God. If we forget God and lead an unrighteous life the reverse is the case, which will land us in misery, pain and sorrow. It is rightly said that heaven and hell are here. We make our own heaven and our own hell. Milton has rightly said :

"The mind. in its own place,
and in itself,
Can make a heaven of hell,
and a hell of heaven."

A man having pure, noble and holy thoughts, enjoys inner peace and joy and is really in heaven. To have an unbridled mind, full of low, grovelling desires, is

virtually to live in hell. So heaven and hell are as we make them according to the state of our mind and life.

SPIRITUAL HEALING

Q: How can we help somebody to be physically healed through spiritual means?

Ramdas: That should not be the aim of spirituality. It is to elevate ourselves into the Divine consciousness. Thereafter, God uses us as His instruments to heal physical sufferings of others, if He wills so. But to cultivate spiritual powers only with the object of healing physical diseases of our friends or neighbours does not seem to be the right way. Let us first heal ourselves. This is the primary condition necessary for loving our neighbour in a selfless spirit. Otherwise, we may be trying to heal the diseases of others with some motive which is not desirable. So, let the spiritual powers we develop raise us to a height in which we can find union with God and, thereafter, let God use us as He pleases. And, verily, He uses us for relieving the distress of others on the physical and mental planes.

SEEK AND YOU SHALL FIND

Q: What should we do to find our Guru if we want to find one?

Ramdas: We must keenly aspire to have one and we will surely get one. There is always a supply when there is an earnest demand. "Seek, and ye shall find." "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

AHIMSA, A QUALITY OF THE HEART

Q : Can you talk to us about Ahimsa ?

Ramdas : Ahimsa is a quality of the heart more than any physical restraint. The mind must be free from hate. A man who does not hate, but always loves everybody is really observing Ahimsa or non-violence. Externally, a man may appear to be harsh, but inwardly he may be all-loving. So, Ahimsa is a quality of the heart and it is developed by tuning our heart with God. When one is free from lust, jealousy, malice and wrath, he has attained true Ahimsa or utter freedom from hate. His life is then leavened wholly with love, all his actions bear the stamp of love. He means well and never ill, in all that he says and does. He becomes forgiveness itself. He has in him no thought of revenge or retaliation. He does good even to those who do evil to him. He bears all things patiently and calmly, without grumbling or blaming. One who has developed this nature by the grace of God is truly non-violent and is a God-man.

DURING MEDITATION

Q : Why do we feel during meditation as if our throat and head swell ?

Ramdas : It may be possible you get this experience when your breathing stops. Very often, during meditation, breathing becomes slow and regular. Sometimes it automatically stops, without your deliberate effort. At that time the throat and the head appear to be swollen, but actually it is only a feeling and not a fact. Without taking notice of it, if you

keep yourself absorbed in the thought of God, this feeling will disappear.

ANIMALS CANNOT REALISE GOD

Q : Why should animals not be able to realise God ?

Ramdas : God has not gifted them with reasoning faculty whereas man has been granted that unique privilege. Man has the intellect, which discriminates between right and wrong, true and false, ignorance and knowledge, and thereby enables him to distinguish the real from the unreal. This discriminative faculty is lacking in animals. They go only by instinct and impulse. If we are actuated only by such impulses and instincts, we shall be no better than animals. If we use our reasoning faculty and decide before we undertake any action, whether it is right or wrong, and thereby avoid wrong, we shall be acting wisely and can march onwards. This kind of judgment is not possible for animals. So animals are not able to progress towards the state of complete freedom from the thralldom of desire and action and rise to a consciousness in which they can experience the self-existent, immortal and perfect joy within. It is rightly said that a man who uses his reasoning faculty is a Purusha—man, if not, he is Pashu—animal.

MAN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ANIMALS

Q : What part have the animals to play in their relations with man ?

Ramdas : The question had better be put the other way, that is, what relationship should man have

with animals ? Man must be kind and good to them and help them in their onward evolution by loving them, looking after them with all care, and then enabling them to rise to the higher state of life like the human. It has been found that life evolves from a lower state to a higher one and gradually reaches the highest which is God. So animals are at a certain stage which marks their evolution to a higher state of life. Higher than the animal state is the human state, and higher than the human is the Divine. So we must help their evolution to a human life. The way is to love them and take care of them with all tenderness and give them the best of our company, because in human association they are bound to rise from a lower to a higher state.

EFFECT OF HUMAN CONTACT ON ANIMALS

Q : When an animal in the company of man develops the consciousness of right or wrong according to the human standard, instead of its own, is that of importance ?

Ramdas : Surely, it is of importance because, in its own way, it sees things right and wrong from an utterly selfish standpoint. Whatever it gets for satisfying its hunger, sense-needs, etc., it thinks to be right, and whatever comes against, it takes to be evil and fights it. But a true human being is not like that. He is ready to sacrifice his own pleasure in order to give joy to another. This nature is found only in human beings and not in animals, except it be as between mother and offspring, — because even the

animal is willing to sacrifice its own interest in favour of its offspring. The animal does not do so with regard to those other than her own young ones.

Man is a nobler animal. He can sacrifice himself for the good of others whenever he sees suffering,—whether the sufferer is his kith and kin, or beyond the circle of his family. He is on a higher plane than the animal and so his company surely elevates the animal, just as a savage in the company of a civilised man learns what civilisation is and evolves himself unconsciously. When a civilised man comes in contact with a saintly person, he evolves to a higher spiritual state in which his vision is still more expanded than before. He looks upon everybody, even those beyond the circle of his family, with great love, and serves them as he serves his intimate relations and friends. In that way, every individual, whether animal or human, gradually evolves to a higher consciousness which is one with the Divine Consciousness.

Q: What should we think of the theory of Theosophists that by great perversion the soul can destroy itself?

Ramdas: Ramdas for one does not believe it. Soul can never be destroyed. Soul may get degraded and go into lower forms of life, but it is indestructible.

REINCARNATION—A LOGICAL THEORY

Q: When we think that we have only the short span of one life-time, is it not an obstacle? Is it not easier that we have a succession of lives before us?

Ramdas : Succession of life is a perfectly logical theory. Among the Hindus it is believed that after this life, we assume again another life, by means of re-birth or re-incarnation. It is only after gradually evolving through a series of lives that we reach our pristine divine state. A chance of only one short span of life is not enough for a soul to realise its highest spiritual destiny, because the impurities that lie thick on the soul are so strong that it takes many births to rub them off or clear them away. It is not an easy matter. We have to struggle hard and, very often, we find one life-time too short for it. The struggle goes on from life to life.

Evolution is not merely on the physical but also on the mental plane. Just as the body has to grow from childhood through various stages to attain manhood and ultimately pass away, the soul within has to pass through various stages before it becomes full-grown and attains God-hood. One life-time is not enough for the soul to achieve perfection. Life after life we progress towards that supreme goal. Time is not a very important factor here. A hundred years of life is nothing compared to eternity.

YOU ARE DEATHLESS AND ETERNAL

So, if we do not succeed in one life in attaining the goal, we should not despair. There is eternity before us, and let us consciously evolve instead of allowing only nature to work up our evolution. The joy consists in knowing that we are evolving, and this consciousness or awareness comes to us when we

commune with God. Then we find that we are making a continual series of upward movements through our lives. Death will have no terrors for us because we know, then, we are deathless and eternal. We live life after life. The body may perish, but the soul does not. The soul is immortal. About this there is a verse in the Bhagavad Gita which is :

नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः ।

न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः ॥

“Weapons do not cut it, fire does not burn it, water also does not moisten it, and wind does not dry it.” Death is unavoidable to everything that is created, but the Atman is immortal. It is birthless, deathless and changeless. Knowing this, be free and be happy.

SIGNIFICANCE OF RELIGIOUS ROBES

Q : Have the clothes we wear any influence on the spiritual life ?

Ramdas : No, unless it be for one who has renounced all desires for the world or attachment for the world, and lives a life completely cut off from the world. For him it is important. For a seeker of Truth, not engaged in any other activities, the peculiar dress he puts on helps him to remember that his life is dedicated to God. When his dedication has become complete and realisation of God is achieved, it is immaterial what dress he puts on.

Ramdas tells this from his own experience. He was wearing ochre-coloured clothes during his early years of spiritual Sadhana or God seeking. He conti-

nued dressing that way for about three or four years after which he gave them up, and he started wearing the white clothes commonly used by all. When he had the coloured clothes on, he was feeling that his life was a dedicated one. The ochre colour signifies renunciation. So whenever he looked at the cloth, he felt this life was God's and not to be used for anything except for the realisation and service of God. Thus it was helpful, though it is not always essential.

A person can dedicate himself or herself to God without any external changes, because the dedication is purely an internal matter. He may use any cloth he likes. It is immaterial which way he dresses. Many saints dress themselves in the ordinary way and yet have their whole life dedicated to God. Their life is one of perfect inner renunciation.

ON BLACK AND LIGHT COLOURS

Q : Is it desirable to be surrounded by light colours rather than by dark colours ?

Ramdas : Light colours are preferable.

Q : When we wear black clothes, do they have any effect on us ?

Ramdas : Ramdas has not put on black clothes to study their effects on him. But, somehow, Ramdas is not in favour of black. He does not wish to have anything black. Even when he is given a black fountain pen, he is not in favour of handling it. He does not know why he feels like that and why he favours light colours. This bias is gradually wearing out. God wants him to go beyond the distinction of colours even

in regard to the things that he uses. There are Sadhus in India who wear black clothes. Ramdas has seen a Sadhu in Hyderabad wearing black clothes and is being honoured by thousands of devotees. His dress is like that of the Black Friars of Roman Catholic religious order.

Q : Is black a symbol of selfishness, since it takes all the colours and does not give them back ?

Ramdas : No, we are too hard on the black colour.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF COLOURS

Q : In the Middle Ages in the West, people attached significance to various colours as many circles in India do. Was that really meaningless ?

Ramdas : No. It must have had some significance. Even in Sri Aurobindo Ashram in India the Mother gives the devotees flowers of various colours signifying different qualities. One colour signifies love, another signifies compassion and some purity, and so on. There may be some people who have studied the significance of colours.

Ramdas will now speak something of three colours :

White : It stands for perfect purity.

Orange : This stands for the colour of the flame, which means renunciation. Flame burns everything, and so, when you see a Sannyasin wearing ochre robes, you must take him to be a flame in which all his desires are getting burnt.

Yellow : Buddhists use this colour. Yellow is the colour of a dead body. The Bhikku who wears

yellow robes is as good as dead. He is dead to the world and to all the desires of the flesh.

LOVE AND SERVICE CAN WORK MIRACLES

Q: When we see people who are definitely set against spiritual evolution and refuse to believe in God, does it mean that they are at a certain stage or on a different path altogether?

Ramdas: They are on a path that leads them deeper into the mire of the world and not towards God. They are immersed in worldly pleasures to such an extent that they do not want to give them up and believe in God.

Q: If we want to help them, should we only do it by prayer, or should we interfere otherwise?

Ramdas: It is better that we do not interfere with them by going to teach them, or trying to persuade them. That is not the way. By purifying ourselves through prayer and by treating them with all love in spite of their non-belief in God, we shall be able to change them. Love is a great power which can work miracles. The person who has no belief in God can by love be made to believe in God. In spite of his lack of faith in God, you must love him and serve him. By doing so you will certainly win him over. Not by discussions, arguments or admonitions can you change him. When he is not awakened within, what can he do? It is not his fault.

Q: If these people are brought to me by my profession, — I am a psychologist, — I feel they are coming to me for light. What shall I do to help them?

Ramdas: Do you mean to ask how you can professionally help men who are non-believers in God? If you, with your psychological power and knowledge, can make them happier by awakening them to the consciousness of their divinity, by all means do so.

Q: The difficulty is that I want to try my level best to make them believe in God.

Ramdas: If the person who comes can be persuaded to believe in God, it is well and good. Then if he takes up the repetition of God's name, when you ask him to do so, he will be all right. But if he resists that kind of treatment and says: "I do not want to have anything to do with God, give some treatment, or show me some other means by which I can be cured of my trouble," then, you have to give him the needed relief, with the knowledge you have of psychology or any other science.

TEACH CHILDREN BY EXAMPLE

Q: What is the best way to inculcate the ideas of spirituality in children?

Ramdas: Make them think of God, pray to God, and take His name. You have to create around them a spiritual atmosphere by yourself praying to God and taking His name constantly. In that atmosphere the children will be induced to take His name. This is what happens in the Hindu families. The parents pray and take God's name in the house, and children also develop the same attitude gradually in that atmosphere.

Q: Has Ramdas any advice to give me to better my work, besides repeating His name?

Ramdas : That is the best thing. There is no other technique which Ramdas can give you. You have to tune your mind more and more with God and purify your heart. You will then be able to do better work.

PLANTS RESPOND TO LOVE

Q : When we care for plants with much love, they seem to respond to that love. Is this not correct ?

Ramdas : They even talk to you. In the Ashram we have some flower plants. During summer they do not get water because the wells get dried up. When Ramdas goes near them they tell him : "We are thirsty, we have no water and we are drying up." Ramdas in reply tells them : "What can we do without water ? There is no water in the well. Ramdas is perfectly helpless. God must send us rains and then you will have plenty." And God sends rains and the plants become happy. It is a joy to see the plants growing, waving in the breeze and showing how happy they are. It is possible to commune with them, talk to them, respond to them and also get them respond to our feelings. They love our company. Ramdas has noticed that cocoanut trees yield better when human beings move about freely in the groves. If no human being goes there, there is a very poor yield. They grow well when you attend to them and look at them with joy and love. They have as much life in them as we have in us.

DR. BOSE'S DISCOVERY

Dr. J. C. Bose, the famous scientist of India, has found out that the plants have life and emotions just

as a human being. He brought a plant for experiment and injected into it a solution of sugar. At once the leaves were fluttering with joy. The emotion of the plant was thus made visible to the eyes of those who were witnessing that experiment. After a few minutes he injected a poisonous drug. It was painful to see how the plant shivered and collapsed just as a human being passing through the agonies of death. So the plant has the same emotions as the human being, of both pleasure and pain. The scientist thus came to the conclusion that a plant has as much life as a human being and the same feelings.

ANCIENT RISHIS' REGARD FOR PLANT LIFE

That is why the Rishis never allowed certain plants to be destroyed. They loved plants. If anybody in India wants to pluck some leaves from the Tulsi plant, — which they use for worship, — he or she first of all does Namaskars to the plant and requests the plant to put up with the pain given while plucking some leaves. Only a few shoots and leaves are plucked from the plant even for which the plant's forgiveness is asked. When we love plants we can surely get response from them. The Rishis were cutting down trees for firewood and other purposes. For meeting such requirements there were separate trees. But there were other sacred plants round about their Ashram, the leaves of which were used for worship. In such cases, when they plucked the leaves they felt they were giving pain to the plants.

RAMDAS' EXPERIENCES

Once it happened that Ramdas was occupying a cave in Mangalore for about three months. There were small shrubs everywhere outside the cave. Ramdas used to sit there between the shrubs talking to friends who came to see him and sat in front of him. Once he noticed a friend twisting a small shrub inadvertently. He might not have done it deliberately, but only as a matter of habit. Seeing the shrub being twisted, Ramdas felt such agony as if his own hand was being twisted. Ramdas' pain ceased as soon as the friend stopped twisting the plant. God has made him get over that feeling now.

Ramdas has also mentioned somewhere that when he was once going up a hill for meditation he found a bullock cart passing by the road. In the ascent it was difficult for the bullocks to pull the cart. But the driver was beating the bullocks severely to make them walk fast. Whenever he dealt a blow on the back of the bullock, Ramdas felt that the blow fell on his own back and consequently he shrieked with pain. Ramdas ran down to the cart and requested the driver not to beat the bullocks. The man questioned Ramdas how the bullocks could be made to pull the cart without his beating them. Then he again raised his whip to give another blow to the bullock. Ramdas ran away from there as he could not bear to see the bullock being beaten as each blow on the bullock reacted on him as if it was inflicted on his own back. His body was so sensitive to the pain of others.

When Ramdas sees children idly plucking the leaves of some plants, he says : "Don't do it, you are giving

pain to the plants unnecessarily". Some children pluck the leaves of plants just for the fun of it. We do not allow anybody in the Ashram to do so. Somehow, if anybody does so, Ramdas feels as if his own finger is cut off.

Q : Is it true that when oak trees are very old they reach a state when they have an individual soul ?

Ramdas : There is life and soul in all creatures and things. It is not only when it is old that the oak has a soul. The soul is there in it even when it is young, because the soul resides in all things in the universe. Without a soul the tree cannot grow. Life is inherent in all things. Even in stone there is life.

MUSIC CAN HELP

Q : Can music help us to realise God ?

Ramdas : Yes, if it is related to God.

Q : When we pick flowers from the plant, does the plant like it ?

Ramdas : The plant does not like it. On the plant the flower remains for a longer time, but if plucked it fades away sooner.

Q : A man used to say, when a flower was plucked the plant felt joy, whereas if the plant was wholly uprooted it felt pain.

Ramdas : Pain must be there even if a flower is plucked from the plant, or even when a fruit is plucked from the tree. But if the fruit ripens and drops of itself, there will be no pain.

MAN'S AND GOD'S SENSE OF BEAUTY

Q : There is a Japanese theory that flowers and plants have a wish to contribute to external beauty. If we cut off a branch or pluck flowers with the idea of making the plant perfectly beautiful, then it joins in the happiness.

Ramdas : Nothing of the kind. That is beauty in the eyes of man. There is a beauty of nature, that is, beauty in the eyes of God, only when the plants are left as they are. The plants have been given certain branches and certain directions of growth according to the will of God who is the source of all beauty. Everything is beautiful in His eyes. What is beautiful for Him may not be beautiful for the human eye because man's sense of beauty is different, and therefore he cuts and shapes them as he likes, only to cater to his own ideas of beauty. We must see as God sees. Then only we shall appreciate beauty as it is. The sense of beauty differs with different people. That is not the real sense of beauty which is God's, according to which He has created this universe.

Q : There is a problem for the gardener. He loves the plants very much but he has to prune them sometimes very drastically, cutting almost everything down because when the plants are cut that way, they will grow quickly.

Ramdas : It is not so much for beauty that he cuts them. If they are cut, they may give better and bigger flowers.

UNIVERSALISATION BREAKS ALL BARRIERS

Q : It seems that there is a sort of normal process going on. First of all we get attached to one particular religion, then we wish to love all equally ; the way of living adapts itself to it ; and finally the angle of vision becomes quite different. Are these changes not relative ?

Ramdas : When we are changing from the particular to the general, from the individual to the universal, there are stages of progress. But these stages have only a relative importance. The radical change that takes place in us is the transformation of our limited or narrow vision into a vast all-enveloping consciousness which we call Truth or God. In this condition we realise our oneness with all humanity. In the process of the transformation, if you see any stage at all, it is because the external habits to which we are used, due to ignorance, continue for some time, but the universal vision does not admit of any clinging to the old ways and standards of life as universalisation breaks down all the barriers that stand between us and our fellow-beings.

THE GOD-MAN IS A-MORAL

It is not that we become established in the observance of any set of morals taught by the religion in which we are born, but we transcend all such moral laws and reach a state called a-moral. The spiritual laws that govern us thereafter belong to an absolute state, in which we are not relatively moral, but go beyond the sphere of morality. We live in, and react

to the world, after the transformation is complete, on the basis of a deep experience of the all-pervading Self. So our behaviour with people is such that an ordinary man looks at it as very strange. Our selfishness having been uprooted and thrown away from the mind, we have no difference between ourselves and others. We are thoroughly altruistic and decentralised in all the ways of our life. From the worldly standard, we may be unwise and foolish in not saving things for the morrow and, in the worldly-wise way, not laying by for the 'rainy day', as they say. In that respect we are looked upon by the world as not at all practical, but as some strange specimens of humanity with whom they cannot agree or reconcile themselves.

rites — A MATTER OF FAITH

Q : In some countries which are devoted to one particular religion or Church, the non-observance of certain rites shocks the people there. If they do not go to the Mass on Sundays, they are considered to be highly irreligious. Even if we feel we do not get any benefit by such strict observance, should we observe them when we are living in such a country ?

Ramdas : Going to Mass in such cases will help in maintaining intact the social harmony. But, in spiritual progress, it will not be of any help, nay, it will be a positive hindrance.

Q : What do you think of the Roman Catholic dogma that Jesus is actually present in the bread given in the Communion ?

Ramdas : It is all a question of faith.

Q: Does that mean that He is present only if you believe in His presence ?

Ramdas: Surely. If you do not have faith, you cannot feel His presence.

Q: That was also said by a great Christian saint of the past, known as Saint Bouaventare.

THE QUESTION OF BAPTISM

Q: There is often a problem for the parents in Christian countries who do not have belief in baptism, for after all they are not sure if it is safer not to be baptised. The idea is that those who are not baptised cannot go to heaven.

Ramdas: The question of merit for going to heaven is not at all considered here, is that not so ?

Q: Those who are baptised alone can go to heaven.

Ramdas: That means to say, a man may lead a virtuous life and be very devoted to God, and yet, as you say, if he is not baptised he has no entry into heaven ? In this connection Ramdas remembers a saying : "There is salvation for a virtuous infidel, but not for a vicious believer." This might have been said by a sceptic. He equates non-belief with virtue. But it is better to say that a virtuous believer will have salvation and not a vicious non-believer.

PURITY COMES FROM GOD

Real purity comes to us from God. Whatever purity which we think we have achieved by our own effort is no purity at all. It may be only some amount

of control over the mind. We cannot entirely depend upon a mind that is kept under check by some pressure outside. It may go out of control any time, as the desires that may be latent within may come up to the surface any time. The person who has such desires within him cannot be said to be pure. In the external conduct of life a man may, through control of mind, behave well and lead a normally good life, but in his heart there may be so many desires lurking, trying to drag him away from the path of virtue. In the case of those who have received the grace of God, they are pure in heart and their life cannot but be pure. They are permanently so, internally and externally, because they are always basking in the sunshine of Divine Grace.

AN UNTENABLE CLAIM

Ramdas is not contending against the utility of baptism. When it is done by a holy man, it is quite possible that all the sins of the child are washed away then and there and the child thereby made fit to enter heaven. But the claim that belonging to a particular religion and baptism done in a particular way, alone lead the soul to attain salvation, seems to be untenable. There are in other religions also great and holy saints whose touch and blessings can free the soul contaminated by sin and make it fit to enter heaven. The principle of baptism, as Ramdas understands, is that the holy man doing the baptism becomes a channel through which divine grace pours on the person baptised, and, as a result of that, the person is absolved

from all his sins and becomes so pure that he enters the gates of heaven and is eternally happy.

Q : What do you understand by reaching heaven ?

Ramdas : In a state of complete union with God, one is said to be in heaven. God and the soul are united, and they become one.

FOUR FORMS OF SALVATION IN HINDUISM

In Hindu religion there are four forms of salvation. Ramdas described them the other day, but it is necessary to refer to them again. The first one is *Salokya*, —to be in the same place as God is. The second is *Samipya*, — living near God, in close fellowship with Him. The third is *Sarupya*, —to become like God. The fourth is *Sayujya*, — to become one with God.

By becoming one with God, you can enjoy all the other three states. You can remain in the place wherein God is, you can be near Him, you can be like Him also. This is according to the Hindu belief.

"THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS WITHIN YOU"

In Christianity also there may be a specific description of that state when the soul enters heaven or attains salvation. Ramdas, as far as he has read the Christian scriptures, thinks that the soul entering into heaven becomes one with God and is always engaged in His praise, singing of His glories and enjoying eternal felicity, peace and happiness. The idea of becoming one with God, just as a drop becomes one with the ocean when it falls into it, does not seem to be the belief of the orthodox Christians. Ramdas may

be permitted to round up this answer by saying that, as Jesus has declared, "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you." So we have to enter within ourselves and then it is that we find Heaven, and in that Heaven, God.

NO FORCE IN BELIEF

Q : If a child has been baptised to Roman Catholic religion with the will of the parents, and when he grows up he no longer agrees with the practices of that religion, is he entitled to ignore the baptism ?

Ramdas : He ignores it.

Q : Would it be better for the grown up child not to ignore it ?

Ramdas : If he does not believe in it, why should he be forced to follow it ?

Q : If baptism has been an occasion for us to receive some spiritual strength, would it not be wise to take full advantage of it rather than be wandering in other paths ?

Ramdas : How to transcend all the boundaries set by different religions that keep us separate from each other ? Baptism is of the Spirit, and Spirit is immortal, dwelling everywhere. If we are to be truly benefited by baptism, which is of the Spirit and not merely of some external symbol, — water or fire, — we should make the best use of it by transcending all limitations by which we are bound so that we can mingle our life with the universal life and love all beings equally.

NO SENSE OF SUPERIORITY

Q : Can one love all men while remaining a Roman Catholic ?

Ramdas : Can you love a non-Roman Catholic as much as you love a Roman Catholic ?

Q : If you belong to one group or religion, there is some sort of limitation set before you.

Ramdas : When we are going to love all alike, if we keep distinctions of Catholic and non-Catholic, can we practise such a love ?

Q : Some Roman Catholics have done it.

Ramdas : If so, they are not Roman Catholics ; they are universalists.

Q : Is there not the same sense of difference in other religions also, as the sense of superiority which the Roman Catholics have over non-Catholics ? Do the devotees of God not have the same type of superiority over non-believers ?

Ramdas : If they feel a sense of superiority, they are not real devotees.

Q : Those who believe in God hope others also would become believers in God. So also the Roman Catholics think.

Ramdas : If they hope to see any change in the non-believers, they will be all love towards them. By giving love, they will change the non-believers, but not by any other way like persuasion, condemnation, persecution and all that. Love is so pure and glorious that it does not condemn the other person. In love there is no sense of superiority.

NO SPIRITUALITY WITHOUT LOVE

Q : As an individual problem, it is easy for me to love those whom I like. For certain others I may not

have any love. Though I may help them, at the bottom of my heart I do not love them.

Ramdas : If we do not love all, and, on certain occasions if we think we are justified in disliking people, we had better not talk about spirituality. Spiritual realisation automatically makes us love everybody. If we are not prepared to do this and do not want to practise anything for the attainment of this, ours is only a superficial talk about reaching a state of union with God and attaining heaven or salvation. We do not really mean what we say. If we are really earnest, we must keep the highest ideal before us and mould our life accordingly, we must translate the highest spiritual realisation into practice in our day to day life.

Q : I wonder if we are not making too much use of the word 'love'. If we see a divine being in one man, we can love him quite easily. Sometimes it is extremely difficult to love a drunkard we see before us.

Ramdas : That is why we have to raise ourselves to such a spiritual status that we can see the Divine in each and every one. This is the highest vision which comes to us when we realise God in our heart and surrender ourselves completely to Him, thereby wiping out our ego-sense.

Q : In other words, if and when I see I can love all alike, can I take it that I have made a decisive step God-ward ?

Ramdas : Truly.

Q : How can we get there ?

Ramdas : By seeing God within, you can see Him without.

BE WITNESS OF THE DIVINE LILA

Q: I suppose all religions are part of the Divine lila. But is it through free will that the teachings of Christ have been interpreted ?

Ramdas: When we look upon everything as the lila of God we have no question left to be answered. Everything is as it should be. We do not expect to see any change or transformation outside us ; we have only to transform our vision so that we can realise that the whole world and all things in it are only a part of the universal lila or play, in which we do not find good and evil, for we have neither likes nor dislikes. We see things as they are, as planned by the Divine will. All the activities and movements we witness are nothing but movements of the Divine. When we have this vision, we are not of any religion, caste, creed, country or race. We have transcended all these limitations and are therefore looking on the whole world as the lila of God.

NO GRADUALNESS IN TRANSFORMATION

Q: You just said that in this state we have transcended the limitations of race, country and religion. Is it normal that all these should disappear at the same time, or gradually ; that is, some of the limitations, which are easier or can be got rid of sooner, are transcended first and others later on ?

Ramdas: All limitations are relative. When you transcend the relative and reach the absolute, all names and forms of the relative existence disappear. It cannot be a gradual process in which a part is

transcended, a part still remains which will gradually disappear. At one stroke you are taken from the relative to the absolute. Then, whatever is there before you as name and form is looked upon by you without any distinction, because you see it as an expression of the all-transcendent Reality which you have attained. In that vision there cannot be any limitation, based upon name and form, which has yet to be transcended.

Q: If they are all to disappear together, does it not mean that as long as we are conscious that we belong to one particular race, — white, black or yellow, — we will also be conscious that we belong to a particular religion ?

Ramdas: Out of the same metal you make several vessels and you colour them differently, — black, red, white, yellow and so on. When you know they are all made of the same metal, do you make any distinction merely because of their different colours ? The idea of the same metal will be so such ingrained in you that the apparent distinctions of colour will have no importance to you. So, with the realisation of spiritual oneness you will love all humanity equally. You will not identify yourself with any one of the colours as you have become colourless. You must have had some colour at one time, — white, black or yellow, — but that has gone clean, making you colourless.

GRACE IS SELF-LUMINOUS

Q: Are there people who are the elect or chosen?

Ramdas: Chosen by whom ?

Q : I mean, are there people who can reach the summit, while there are others who can never get there ?

Ramdas : God is dwelling in the heart of every one of us. In some He is hidden, in some He is revealed. Those in whom He is revealed are those who are considered to be the chosen ones. In some He removes the mask and in some He retains the mask. Why ? It is His will.

Q : We all wait for the grace of God and for entry into heaven. There are many who receive Grace and hide it within themselves, while others receive Grace and let it work through them.

Ramdas : In what way does one who has received Grace hide it ?

Q : We can see in the world many people who have received the grace of God but do not actually use it.

Ramdas : Those who do not use the Grace have not got it. Grace reveals itself. It is self-luminous. It is just like a cover removed from a burning candle, thereby revealing the flame. The light is burning inside us day and night, even when it is covered. After the cover is removed, it is revealed. Similarly, Grace is already there ; it does not come to us. Only we must become conscious of it. This is like removal of the cover.

Q : Then, do you say that everybody has received Grace and that, according to the parable in the Gospel, Grace falls on different types of ground, but in some places does not sprout like the seed that falls on the rocks ?

Ramdas : Yes, Grace is ever pouring on us as the Sun is ever shedding light on all objects,—opaque, translucent and transparent. On opaque objects the light does not reflect at all. On semi-transparent or translucent objects it partially reflects. On transparent objects like glass it reflects perfectly. So, according to our preparedness, our readiness to receive it and the measure of our purity and capacity, we imbibe Grace and make use of it for transforming our inner and outer life.

Q : How can we say that we have received Grace?

Ramdas : When we become conscious of Grace, our heart becomes perfectly pure and we bear no ill-will towards anybody. We are over-flowing with love towards all beings on the earth. We experience within us a rare joy which we never experienced before.

SELF-PURIFICATION TRANSFORMS OPPONENTS

Q : I have a great aspiration, but my husband is against my following the path of spirituality.

Ramdas : Aspiration is an inner craving of the heart. Our heart secretly craves and aspires for God. This aspiration of the heart need not be known to anybody. It must make us love those who dislike us. As the aspiration grows stronger our heart becomes purer. This is wholly an internal process which cannot and need not be seen from outside. Our prayers can rise from the heart and directly go to God. By His transforming power, our heart's bitterness is changed to sweetness. As the sweetness within us increases and we are possessed of that sweetness completely,

the persons who are against us become favourable to us. Persons who were unfriendly become friendly, those who disliked us begin to like us. Those who did not see eye to eye with us now agree with us, join us, cooperate and harmonise with us.

Ramdas has seen such cases in India where the husband was a rank atheist and the wife was a great devotee of God. By the power of her devotion she was able to convert the husband and make him a devotee. It was not by discussing, condemning or quarrelling, but by loving and patient suffering that she was able to win him over and make him follow the path she was following. Very often, with such persons, we are impatient, assertive and dominating. It is this nature of ours that makes the other party not respond to us. They say: "If you really loved God, you would behave much better than you do at present. You are now so quarrelsome and assertive. If belief in God turns one into what you are, it is better that we keep ourselves away from such a God." This is how they argue, and rightly too.

Q : Are we not atheists because we find it easier for us? As soon as we admit the idea of God, we find so many problems before us.

Ramdas : It is quite the other way. So many problems arise when we do not put faith in God. The moment we put faith in Him, all our problems are solved at once.

THE ULTIMATE AIM OF MEDITATION

Q : The best way, as I understand, to transcend multiplicity is to practise meditation. But how should

we meditate ? Some people say we have to concentrate on a particular object, while others say we must make the mind empty, and so on.

Ramdas : We may adopt any of the several ways. The ultimate object must be kept in view that the mind should be perfectly calm and still. Then only we can realise God's presence within us and everywhere about us. We take to the repetition of God's name in order to concentrate our mind on one sound or one name. What happens then ? The mind will have, to the exclusion of every other thought-wave that rises in it, only one wave, and that wave will be the symbol of the Divine within us. That wave also, in course of time, by an intense practice of meditation, merges and we attain to a state of perfect stillness in which there are no waves at all. In this still mind it is that God reveals Himself ; God's light shines out and we become aware of His presence and realise our perfect union and oneness with Him.

FILL THE MIND WITH GOD-THOUGHT

Q : If we try to empty our mind completely, is there not the danger that beings from the astral plane may take possession of it ?

Ramdas : Ramdas never used the word emptying of the mind. He does not believe in that. Ramdas advises that it should not be done. The practice is only to make the mind still, so that it can be full of God's light, peace and joy, power, glory and bliss. By this process of filling up the mind with God-thought, all other thoughts will disappear just as when a light is

brought into a dark room the darkness is naturally dispelled. The so-called emptying process and the filling up process go together. So also, when you dwell upon the glories, greatness, power and light of God, your mind will be filled with these things, and all that is undivine in you will automatically disappear. It is a process of substitution. When one comes in, the other goes out. When God's power comes, when God's light enters, all your weakness and darkness disappear. When the peace of God enters you, the turmoil of the mind leaves you. So, when the antagonistic forces are subdued and substituted by the divine forces you attain perfect peace. Therefore, think of the glories of God and fill your mind with His light.

A POSITIVE PATH

This is a positive path. Some people believe in emptying the mind first and filling it up later with divine consciousness. That is neither correct nor possible. First of all, think of God, glorify Him, meditate on His greatness and see Him. By that method free the mind from darkness, ignorance and all the hosts that attend on them,—evil, thoughts, desires, ambitions that keep you pinned down to the earth or physical plane.

This is a sign that Grace has come to you. Grace comes with all the powers of the Divine, and when you are filled with it, naturally, all that is undivine will disappear. Do not make the mind blank and arid, but make it full and fertile. Some people believe that by

making the mind blank, they will get God-realisation. This is a mistake. It is also dangerous. There are some yogic practices of Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga, by which they stun the mind by repeated blows on it, with the result that the mind becomes blank, and if one remains in that state for some time, it is quite possible that the mind may be deranged.

HOW BEST TO HELP OTHERS

Q : Sometimes in life we do not know what to do when we feel we are responsible for the mistakes some make on the spiritual path. We could have prevented them, but they do not listen to us. In such cases is it better to let them have the negative experiences with life than our interfering ?

Ramdas : When Ramdas was once climbing up the Himalayas, a girl was coming down a slope on her return journey. She ran so fast that she lost control over herself and went near the precipice and was about to topple down the precipice and be killed. Ramdas was there at that critical time, but he could not do anything to help her. Ramdas prayed to God: "O God, save the girl !" She was saved ! That is all we can do. This experience is given in his book "IN QUEST OF GOD". By God's grace and power everything is possible, if our prayers are really sincere.

We see daily so many are falling into temptations and so many are led into evil ways of life. What can we do ? Can we persuade them not to do such things ? Will they pay heed to our advice ? Generally they don't. So the only thing we can do is to purify our heart and

send waves of earnest love and goodwill to them. Before we can do good to others by our goodwill, let us first pray for ourselves and purify our heart and then become vehicles in the hands of God for His power to work through us for the uplift of others. So far as physical help is concerned, we cannot sometimes do much to prevent another's fall, but spiritual help is still more difficult to render. Spiritual help is the best help.

THE OUTER MUST REFLECT THE INNER

But in the name of spirituality and religion so many evils are done. This is really deplorable. If we are truly on the path that leads us to God, we must become morally and spiritually pure. On the other hand, we get into so many entanglements and say that we do so in the name of spirituality or religion. Spirituality and religion do not admit of our leading an erratic and immoral life. We must grow from purity to purity until we are fully illumined with the light, love and peace of God. This is the ultimate realisation, and we must have this alone in view and work up to the attainment of that supreme goal. All else is only talk and of no avail. We may call ourselves as belonging to this religion or that, this group or that, and as disciples of this person or that. But this will not do. What really counts is spiritual advancement based upon our inner purity and real transformation within us. Our outer life must bear out the fact of our highest spiritual experience. Our outer life must wear itself out in the service of God. This is the test by which

we can know where we stand—not by what we call ourselves, but by what we really are.

GOD REMEMBRANCE MITIGATES SUFFERING

Q : Two thousand years ago Christ was crucified and now his teachings are being crucified. Is this what you meant when you said He will be agonised with us till the end of time ?

Ramdas : Ramdas may not have said that His teachings are being crucified. He might have meant that He shares our sufferings on the earth and makes our burden lighter, as He came to suffer for mankind,—not only for the generation in which He lived, but for all future generations. It actually means that if, in our sufferings, we remember Him, they will be mitigated and we shall feel as if He has taken upon Himself the agony of the world, till the end of time.

GOD AND SON ARE ONE

Q : There is a prayer amongst the Christians which is addressed to God and Jesus who is His only son. How is this to be understood ?

Ramdas : God and the Son are not different. In that sense Jesus is the only Son of God. This is true of all great Teachers that appear in other parts of the world also. They too are sons of God ; in other words, God Himself manifests in and as them.

The word "only" is on the face of it confusing ; but, in reality, it means that God is manifest in Jesus as Son. That is the meaning you must attach to that sentence. So also God can manifest Himself in any

other form, as any other person, in other parts of the world and at other times. But Ramdas should like to know who said those words.

Q : It is in the Roman Catholic creed, adopted.

Ramdas : Did Jesus say that ?

Q : No. The only prayer Jesus taught us was addressed to the Father in Heaven.

Ramdas : That might be because of the greatest adoration the followers had for him. They had seen him alone and none other who had that spiritual state which he had. They therefore rightly looked upon him at that time as the only son of God. True, for that time and for those followers who were in close association with him, it was all right. But if we look at the problem from a wider standpoint, when we study and try to understand the lives and teachings of other great Teachers of the world, we cannot but conclude that those Teachers are also as great Sons of the Divine Father as Jesus is or was.

A COMMON MISTAKE

The followers of those other great Teachers also make the same mistake in thinking that their Teacher is the only Teacher in the world who can save humanity from the clutches of sin and misery. That does not go to prove that what they contend is right. They ignore altogether the greatness of other Teachers. The Muslims say that their Prophet is the only way to salvation. Some Hindus say Rama and Krishna are the only great incarnations and do not accept any other. Buddhists say that by taking refuge in Buddha alone

one can attain emancipation. So also Christians say that unless one accepts Christ and takes Him as the way to salvation, one cannot attain that supreme beatitude which is held forth as the goal of human life. This attitude is natural, but we must admit that it is an attitude which brings us under certain limitations. Let us accept the limitations for the time being and try to transcend them so that we can look upon all the great Teachers as coming from the same God for the uplift and liberation of mankind from the thralldom of ignorance, sin and misery.

'THE TASTE OF THE PUDDING IS IN EATING'

Q: Could you tell us a few words about the name of God and its power?

Ramdas: The power of the Name and the power of God are one and the same, because God and His name are one and the same, just as sun and its light. One cannot exist without the other. "The taste of the pudding lies in the eating", as the proverb goes. So, if you want to know the power and greatness of the Name, you should constantly repeat it and see what effect it produces on your mind, how it purifies you thoroughly and how it brings you in contact with the Divine within you. All these you get through experience. However much Ramdas may extol the Name before you, you will not be able to comprehend its greatness. If Ramdas goes on lecturing to you for days and days on the sweetness of sugar, which you have not tasted, you will never know the taste of it. But if you eat it, you will immediately know its taste.

Similarly, those who want to know the greatness, power and glory of the Name must constantly keep it on their tongue, feeling conscious at the same time that they are taking the name of the Divine Spirit within, whose qualities are absolute existence, consciousness and bliss.

THE CHRISTIAN TRINITY IS ONE

Q: Would you like to say something about the question which was asked yesterday about "Om Tat Sat" and the Christian Trinity?

Ramdas: As Ramdas understands it, although there are three, the Christian Trinity is really one. This has been approved of by the Father who met Ramdas here. He knew that these three, though apparently different,—Father, Son and Holy Ghost,—are really one.

OM TAT SAT

We shall now try to understand "Om Tat Sat". "Om" is a combination of the three sounds A, U, M. These put together make the sound 'Om'. 'A' stands for creation, 'U' stands for preservation, and 'M' stands for destruction. From the original silent Spirit, first arose this sound, and this sound is the cause of the entire universal manifestation. The sound is nothing but a wave that rose on the bosom of the pure, still, calm, silent, all-pervading spirit of God, and this sound wave is the universe we see before us.

This is according to the ancient Hindu scriptures. The creation that we see before us is really not a

creation but only a projection from that Spirit. So it is not different from God, just as the wave rising from the sea is not different from the sea. The same water of the sea is in the form of the wave. The moving wave is water and the still sea is also water. So the pure, still, calm, silent, all-pervading Spirit is He, and the vast manifestation which is a wave that rose from that Sea of Silence is also He. Hence the assertion is made by the great sages of India that the world itself is Brahman: *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma*, "Verily, all this universe is Brahman".

GO BACK TO THE ORIGIN

In this manifestation there are three forces working,—one is creative, another preservative and the last one destructive. Now, by practice, we have to reach that calm, still and silent Spirit from which the universe and the individual soul have come forth. To go back to that stillness, the easiest way shown by the Upanishads is constant repetition or chanting of OM. Then we rise from the grossest to the subtlest plane and transcending even that, merge ourselves in the universal consciousness of God. When we want to go back to the origin from where we started, the repetition of OM is most helpful. It creates in us such vibrations as take us into the subtler realms until the vibrations cease and our individual existence merges in that supreme Brahman who pervades everywhere. This is the experience of the static aspect of the Divine.

"TAT" means "that". "SAT" means "truth". So, "OM TAT SAT" means "This Om is the Truth". That

which is everlasting, which never perishes, is Truth. 'Om' represents or symbolises that Truth. When you repeat the Mantra "Om Tat Sat", you have to bring into your mind the meaning described now. Then your mind will gradually become purer and purer, subtler and subtler, until it is lost in the original sound 'Om', which is called 'Nada Brahma'. It is the first wave. Ultimately, that wave also will cease, bringing you the experience of the all-pervading, static, silent spirit of God. 'Nada' means sound, and through the sound you reach the static and silent Spirit, Brahman, which is beyond sound, where sound, light, action, power, name or form have no place. When you are conscious of that Spirit, and active in the world, your actions will be a spontaneous outflow, because in that state your ego-sense completely vanishes and you know that you are the universal, static, calm, silent Spirit, and that the universal manifestation is an expression or projection of that Spirit, not different from it.

THE TEACHING OF VEDANTA

By such projection, the original state of the static Spirit remains unaffected. So those two states, the static and the dynamic, exist together. Though apparently different, they are really one. This is the teaching of Vedanta. Vedanta says : *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma* : "Verily, all this universe is Brahman"—the unmanifest as well as the manifest, that which has no name and form and that which has name and form. All these put together is the all-transcendent and all-inclusive

supreme God-head, towards whom we are all progressing, and from whom we expect Grace to flow into us and transform us. He is the great God of all nations, all planets and the whole universe. He is the Controller, the Master, to whom we have to be loyal, to whom we have to surrender ourselves, and through whose Grace alone our life can be redeemed, purified and illumined in every way.

ALL MANTRAS DEVELOP WILL-POWER

Q: Is there a Mantra which will enable us to develop will-power?

Ramdas: All Mantras develop the will-power. Without developing the will-power we shall not be able to conquer our lower desires and walk always on the path of righteousness.

FAITH IS THE FIRST STEP

Q: Is it possible to start on the road which you have taught us, without having a strong religious basis to start with? I am thinking particularly of the problem of children starting on the path.

Ramdas: The first step to be taught to children is to have faith in God. The rest will necessarily follow. When the child has faith, its mind will turn towards God automatically and for whatever it wants, it will pray to the Divine Father or Mother. In the beginning, the child may pray to God for some material things, because it does not know the value of a higher or spiritual life. But, as it grows, it will look to God for purity and peace of mind and for the necessary strength

to lead a righteous life always. So, this faith will grow in such a way that when the child grows up to manhood, he will depend upon God for everything. In that state he will lead a perfectly pure and noble life by which he will make himself really useful to all mankind. He will be a servant of humanity and will sacrifice all his petty interests for the uplift and service of others. His will be the noblest life on earth. Otherwise, he will be utterly selfish and become a source of trouble to others, catering only to his own petty needs. So, his life from childhood must be built up in such a way that he cultivates love, faith and devotion for God and is guided always on the path of truth, rectitude and goodness.

THE VALUE OF ENVIRONMENT

For this purpose a proper environment should also be provided for the child. The parents will have to see that children get company of those who can help them in their spiritual growth. This is possible, of course, only when those who are teaching and guiding them are themselves pure and are actuated by a high ideal of service. It is like bringing up a tender plant. Just as a gardener looks after the plant and builds a fence around it to guard against destruction by animals, the parents also have to look after their children and protect them against evil influences from outside. Care and protection is essential for the young plant till it grows up. But when it is sufficiently large and strong, the fencing or the care of the gardener is no longer necessary. It reaches a stage when it yields

fruits and shade for the benefit of others. So our life must grow from childhood to useful manhood so that we may be able to shelter those who are in trouble and make them happy.

HOW TO ESCAPE FROM DESPAIR

Q: There is a person very dear to my heart. She goes through real fits of despair. Normally she is happy and devoted to God. But suddenly, from time to time, she gets into utter darkness and sees nothing but darkness in and about her. She cannot get rid of this state for two days and suddenly she comes back to herself and is happy again. Can you give her some practical advice in order to help her?

Ramdas: During her peaceful and happy moments she must turn her mind to God, think of Him, pray to Him, have His holy name on her lips and thereby avert the coming fit of despair. Does she engage herself in any devotional practices when she is in her happy moments?

Q: Yes, she is very devoted. In spite of that she gets these moments of depression.

Ramdas: This is called the dark night of the soul. This comes usually in the life of all seekers of truth, but it passes away. It is inevitable. There are moments of exaltation, ecstasy and joy, which raise us to a high pitch, and, suddenly, there is a fall from it and we experience utter frustration and agony. It is like a touch and go. When ecstasy comes, it comes with great force. So also, when it disappears, we feel we have fallen from a very high state into the depth where there is nothing but darkness and agony.

The lady you refer to must pray to God to free her from this state. God is not far away from her. He is within her heart. Ramdas also blesses her so that she may get back that balance in which she may remain always and that these fits of depression may seize her no more. Extreme ecstasy results in extreme despondency. Afterwards equilibrium is attained and there will be serenity and peace always with her. The sooner she gets this state of equilibrium the better for her. May she have a constant stream of God remembrance running in her mind !

INSTRUCTIONS ON MEDITATION

We shall now have a few minutes of meditation. When you sit silently, be conscious, in the first place, that the God you seek is in your own heart, and then mentally repeat His holy name or the Mantra that you have received from your spiritual preceptor. Make the mind repeat the Mantra until all its waves cease and it becomes perfectly still. If it does not easily become still, continue the repetition of Name mentally. The Name has the power to quell all the waves of the mind. As the mind becomes still, the repetition will cease automatically and the mind will now experience a state of peace which is not of anything external but purely internal. That means the peace comes from the depths of your own being. This is from God within you. So the first thing you have to do is to repeat God's name mentally to curb the restless mind and its outgoing tendency. To keep the mind under control, Name is the most powerful means.

Now you may go on repeating the Name mentally, sitting silent, until the mind becomes still. Sit like that for half an hour, or any period up to half an hour, even after repetition stops. It must stop by itself. You should not force the mind in any way. You must also be sitting in a relaxed condition. Do not be stiff. Let your body be erect, because in the erect position it is that you can be alert and watchful.

(There was meditation for a few minutes)

GENEVA,

3rd September 1954.

THE TRIPLE STATES

Q: Can you tell us something about the soul? Does the individual soul pass through different states of experience? Something also about the dream and wakeful states of existence and how the individuality exists in such states?

Ramdas: The individual in the waking and the dream states is the same. The same individual puts on various masks. He plays in the dream state in one way and in the waking state in another. In the dream state the mind alone is active. In the waking state the mind and the senses are active. Very often, we do not forget our individuality in the dream; it is the same as we experience in the wakeful state. 'I am I' whether in the dream state or the wakeful state. But what happens is, when we wake up all the dream experiences prove to be false, and in the dream state all the experiences of the wakeful state are lost sight of. Sometimes, there may be a connection between the two; that is, we may see a continuance of our wakeful experiences in the dreams. The deep sleep state is such that in it neither the senses nor the mind is active. But the 'I' alone exists, which is enveloped by *tamas* or ignorance.

'I' PERSISTS IN ALL THE STATES

It has been said, according to Hindu philosophy, that since all these states are transient they are false.

That which has no permanency about it cannot be real. Beyond the deep sleep, dream, and wakeful states there is an existence, which is the only reality and which remains the same. This is the "I"-consciousness in us. The "I"-consciousness persists in all the three states. The "I" of the wakeful state, the "I" of the dream state and the "I" of the deep sleep state is one. We say "I was awake", "I dreamt" and "I slept". That "I", which exists in all the three states and which is beyond all these three states, is the only reality. Therefore that reality is what is called the Atman or God and we must realise that. That reality is the witness, so to say, of these three states. After a refreshing sleep without dreams, we get up and say "I had such a sound sleep, a pleasant sleep!" Who is that "I" who had the sound or pleasant sleep? If we try to probe beyond the three states, we come upon a state of absolute existence which is perfect, static, calm, serene, eternal, and we realise that the other three states are impermanent, changing and unreal.

REALISE THE TRUTH BEYOND THE TRIPLE STATES

Our aim should be to realise that Truth which is beyond the wakeful, dream and sleep states, an awareness within us, a consciousness ever awake, never asleep, never affected by the clouds that pass before it, the clouds of wakeful, dream and sleep states. It is like this: a man sometimes puts on a white dress. After some time he changes it and puts on a red dress and then again changes it and puts on a black dress. The person who is wearing all these dresses is one and

the same, and he is different from all the dresses. The wakeful state is compared to the white dress, the dream state to the red dress, and the sleep state to the black dress. But the person who puts on these dresses is different from the dresses.

Q: But the person who puts on these different dresses is the person who puts on the dresses of all people at the same time, and who is beyond all these.

Ramdas: He remains unaffected within, and He appears in various forms, putting on and changing dresses over and again. The same underlying Reality has assumed all these forms, donning and doffing them. Though He assumes so many forms, He still remains formless.

THE NATURE OF LIBERATION

Q: After this life, does the individual soul continue and then take another body, or does it merge entirely in the Cosmic Soul and something else emerges to take another body? Is there a continuity between one body and another?

Ramdas: As regards the merger of the individual in the Cosmic, it depends upon the state of the soul when he gives up this body. In fact, even during the lifetime of a person, the soul merges in the Universal Soul. It can be rightly said that this merger is not actually a merger though, for convenience of expression, we speak in those terms.

The experience is only an awareness of our immortal, all-pervading, changeless Existence. There is a veil between us and that Existence, which makes

us think that we are not That. When the veil is removed, we know we are That. It is not a merger, but only shedding the sense of individuality and knowing, experiencing, the universal nature of our being.

We are the supreme all-pervading Existence, but we do not know it. Removal of this ignorance alone can make us know we are That. Our vision then is of the universal; we see the one in the many. We see the one behind the many, the one all-pervading Reality, just as we find in the rosary only one thread passing through all the beads and binding all of them together. If we look at the beads only and ignore the thread that passes through them, all the beads appear to be distinct from one another. But when we recognise the thread we know that all the beads are strung together into one rosary, one unit.

Similarly, all the names and forms of the universe are strung together as it were, the indwelling reality being the *Sutratma*. God is called '*Antaryami*' and '*Sutratma*'. '*Antaryami*' means the Lord who dwells in the heart of every one of us. '*Sutratma*' means the Atma which like the thread binds all together. The moment we become aware that we are the Atman we will have got the vision of seeing Him everywhere. The separateness, or the sense of diversity, which is caused by ignorance or ego-consciousness, disappears and we feel one with everybody in the light of the experience of that Reality. We identify ourselves with It and with all these forms which are Its expressions.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER DEATH ?

After the body dies, what happens is the question : whether we are re-born or not. If we have realised this Truth, we are not born again. So long as we have not realised It, we shall be born again and again until we evolve to a state in which we know we are the all-pervading Truth. When the individuality is gone, there is nobody to be re-born. We are free from re-birth, whether in heaven or on this earth.

But there is one thing. Some do believe that even after liberation, a divine individuality persists. We have then a divine body which assumes a human form again for the good of humanity. Therefore Prophets are born again and again in order to teach others the path of God-realisation and liberate them. Even in the Bible it is said that some Prophets of old are born again. This is possible.

Q : I understand quite well what you mean by union with God. But if we do not realise, who is it that is re-born ? Is there ego-consciousness after death ?

Ramdas : It is the individual soul that is re-born again and again until it realises that it is cosmic Reality.

Q : If the individual soul takes up one body after another, it is conscious already that its personality is not of one particular body.

Ramdas : It is the same soul that had appeared in a particular body in a past life that assumes another body in this life, and yet another body in the next life. In all these bodies it strives either to attain the know-

ledge of God, or to enjoy the pleasures of the senses, remaining oblivious of God. If it does not attain the knowledge of God, it is caught in the cycle of birth and death. If it strives for liberation from ignorance, it will evolve from birth to birth, until at last it realises that it is the all-pervading Truth. Thereafter, there will be no birth for it, unless it comes down again by its own will for the liberation of others.

In the case of the bound soul, it comes to take a body by the force of its desires. It has no option. The desires drag it back to earthly life for their satisfaction. If we have many desires unfulfilled before our death, those desires will drag us again and force us to take a body for fulfilling them in the new life. Thus the soul goes on moving in a cycle of birth and death. When desires become extinct, births cease. This is possible only when a man has realised God.

PHYSICAL AND SUBTLE BODIES

Q : Our idea of personality or individuality is closely associated with our body, thoughts and emotions. If the soul leaves one body and takes another, how do these thoughts and emotions follow ?

Ramdas : Therefore it is said that we have four bodies, each subtler than the other. First is *Sthula-Sarira*, the physical body ; next is the *Sukshma-Sarira*, the subtle body ; beyond that is the Astral or causal body ; and even beyond that is the all-pervading Existence which is our real being. When a person dies, it is only his physical body or *Sthula-Sarira* that perishes and the remaining subtle bodies are there, carrying

with them all his unfulfilled desires and the cumulative influence of past lives. They again assume a physical body.

THE MYSTERY OF IGNORANCE

Q : Does the soul realise that it is changing from body to body ? Is it conscious of it ?

Ramdas : No, it is not ; because it has lost its past memories.

Q : What is the reason for the ignorance which prevents realisation ?

Ramdas : That is a mystery. How this ignorance came and why it came is difficult to comprehend, because that belongs to the province of infinity and eternity where our mind cannot reach. It is beyond the range of intellect. When we try to understand it, the mind is baffled ; it becomes perfectly still. Then we get the super-conscious experience. We know we are caught in a cage. Our immediate problem is how to get out of it. We need not fritter away our time and energy in speculating why the cage is here, and when, why and how it was built. The ignorance is there ; how to remove it is our only problem. We are here only to realise that God and we are one.

THE PROBLEM OF POPULATION

Q : If it is the same soul that takes birth again and again, how is it that the population of the world goes on increasing ?

Ramdas : We have to take into consideration the evolution that is taking place from the animal state to

the human if not also from the Deva plane. Animals are evolving from lower to higher forms of consciousness, and from the animal status, many may have risen to the human. The increase may be partly accounted for this way. Besides, many awaiting birth as humans might have also come down. So, from the top as well as from the bottom, there is regular inflow, resulting in an increase of the human population.

GOD IS ALREADY WITHIN YOU

Q : Would you like to talk to us about Jesus's sentence : "Thou wouldst not be seeking ME hadst thou not already found ME" ?

Ramdas : That is a very significant saying, because you are seeking Him who is already within you. You have not to find God outside. He is already there and has only to be discovered. It is as if you have put something in your pocket and forgotten all about it. When you are told that it is in your own pocket, you will find it there ; you will not have gained anything new, but found only what you already had. So also, you become aware of God who is already in your heart. Therefore it is said that removal of ignorance alone will enable you to know that He is in you and you are He. In that sense Ramdas understands the sentence of Jesus, which is pregnant with meaning.

THE INDIFFERENCE TO THE WORLD

Q : The only true death will be total indifference to the world and I feel nobody can reach that total indifference.

Ramdas : When a soul is fully alive to God he is dead to the world. That may be said to be perfect indifference to the world. The nature of this indifference is that you have neither attraction to, nor repulsion from, the world. You are neither attached to, nor detached from, the worldly objects, because your mind is completely absorbed in God-consciousness.

In Indian terminology this is called *Udaseenatha* which means indifference to the objects of the world, knowing that they are perishable and impermanent. 'You are dead towards them,' means you are indifferent whether you get them, or do not get them. Supposing there is an object to which you feel neither attraction nor repulsion, then, that object ceases to exist as far as you are concerned. It is there before you, but it does not exist for you. That is real indifference to the world. Only when you have such an indifference can you be aware of the immortal, static, calm and silent Spirit which pervades and transcends the world.

Q : In one of your books you wrote about your experience in Jhansi where Mahadev Prasad took you to two saints, one of whom cared not for food. Is that the indifference you are talking about ?

Ramdas : He was so unconscious of the body, so deeply absorbed in that static, silent Spirit within, that he was indifferent to the body and indifferent to the world. In that state, somebody had to feed him, to keep the body going. This is a sort of *Videha-mukti*. The person is totally oblivious of the body. Unless the body is taken care of by somebody, it may die within 21 days. Such persons are fed by devotees and made

to live for their sake, because the contact of such saints is very elevating for those on the spiritual path.

Q : But the saint does not mind it.

Ramdas : No, he does not mind it at all.

SUSTENANCE FROM THE COSMIC POWER

Q : Could they not derive physical sustenance from the Cosmic Force, as a Christian saint has been doing for the last thirty years without taking anything as others do ?

Ramdas : That is also quite possible, when the necessary sustenance is drawn from the Cosmic Energy. As Sri Aurobindo says, the body can be immortalised by attaining a state of Yoga by which one can in this way make the body live for ever. So many Yogis, they say, are living in the Himalayas in this state. They never age and never die.

Q : Why do they do it ?

Ramdas : They do it because they have come into that state of Yoga and their body lives long or for ever, automatically sustained by Cosmic Energy.

THEY ALSO HELP THE WORLD

Q : But, is not such indifference getting away from the world and leaving the world as it is ?

Ramdas : They help the world in a mysterious way even if they are away from it, perhaps more than one who goes about saying that he is doing good to the world. From solitude their influence upon the human race is so powerful that they in a subtle way help all spiritual aspirants on their path, so that they can attain

Self-realisation. It is said that it is because of their influence on the world that we are living together in a spirit of friendliness, instead of living like wild beasts, tearing up one another.

WORLD IS GOD

Q : Is it normal in Sadhana that when we endeavour to get away from the world and have done so to some extent, it is too painful to come back to it again ?

Ramdas : It may appear to be painful, but we have to move in the world with a new vision, having attained that inner peace, light and joy. By so doing, we can test how far we are able to maintain our inner equilibrium in the midst of the crowd, noise and bustle. We are not to go into solitude to remain there for ever. It should be only to undergo spiritual practices in order to control the mind and keep it ever fixed in the divine consciousness. There is a story of a spiritual aspirant who did not find God in the world and went to a forest far away, to live in a cave. He spent many years in the forest praying to God for His Darshan. After a long time God gave him Darshan in the form of the world. He then thought he was foolish in having run away from God because he found now that the world is God Himself. So he came back to the world and saw God everywhere.

THE JOY OF SAT-SANG

Q : It is recorded in the Gospel that Jesus said : "Whenever three of you are together, I am with you." Why should there be three together for His Presence ?

Ramdas : He is always with you, whether you are collected together in threes, fours or tens, or when a person is all by himself. When you remember Him, sing His glories, He is there with you. The Hindu sacred scriptures quote God's own declaration :—

नाहं वसामि वैकुण्ठे न योगिहृदये रवौ ।

सद्भक्ता यत्र गायन्ति तत्र तिष्ठामि नारद ॥

The sloka means :— "I do not dwell, O Narada, in Vaikuntha, nor in the hearts of yogis, nor in the Sun, I dwell wherever My devotees sing My glories."

In other words, where three persons meet together and talk about God and feel a sense of spiritual unity among themselves, then a new joy rises in their hearts which is really ineffable. That pure joy is none other than Christ. Christ stands for the consciousness of bliss and peace. But why should there be three persons ? Because he gives three as the least number. He does not mean that he will not be there when ten people are assembled together in His name, to talk about Him and to sing about him. When you are alone, then also you can see Him within you and even talk to Him. It is said that when you are away from the din and bustle of earthly life and retire into sacred spots, pure and holy, there you can commune with God. Saints do talk to Him. You do not listen to Him in the midst of the crowd and noise of the world. When you are alone, sitting silently with your eyes gazing at Him within, and your ears are eager to listen to His voice, you hear him distinctly. This is the experience of so many saints and

devotees of God. This is so because their ears are not filled with noises of the world.

Q: Would this serve to show how we should work in a group ?

Ramdas : It shows that. When you meet together, the best occupation for you is to talk about God instead of gossiping about so many unimportant and trashy things. Devotees always like to meet each other because they can talk about their Beloved and for the moment lose the body idea. They go into a strange rapture. For what purpose have we all met here together ? To talk of God. When we talk and hear about Him, there is joy in our hearts and thereby we become conscious of Him. Now the hidden bliss in our heart reveals itself and we experience It—the bliss of the Eternal.

THE OBJECT OF CONFESSION IS DIFFERENT

Q: Can't we have intimate talk much more easily when there are two people together, rather than when there are three ? For example, during confessions there are only two persons.

Ramdas : Confession is only admitting the sins you have committed and by so doing you feel relieved of your heart's burden. Confession is made before one who is spiritually illumined and in whom you have great trust and for whom you have high reverence. When you open your heart to him, it becomes light and free and that instant you feel that you are purified. But confessions of this nature are not to be done over and over again. When you once confess your sin, you

should not commit it again. When you confess, you do so having repented for the sinful act, and you turn over a new leaf. You pray to God to give you strength to resist all temptation. But this is not the case when three devotees meet together. They do so to talk of Christ, his glory, love and sacrifice. In that talk their heart is awakened to the awareness of the Divine or Christ within them and thus they commune with Him. In that communion they experience great joy, they rise above their body-consciousness and have no idea of the passage of time.

AN INNER MEANING

Q: Regarding the same words of Christ a teacher said that the three did not refer to three different individuals, but to the heart, mind and spirit.

Ramdas: This is an esoteric or allegorical meaning, an inner meaning. Every sentence uttered by a saint can be interpreted variously. In this case it may mean three persons meeting together, or it may also be explained, as the teacher has done, that it is a meeting of the mind, the heart and the spirit. The latter is an inner meaning which we read into the teaching of Christ.

PROBLEMS OF THEOLOGY

Q: (a) At the beginning of all things, were all souls who at present consider themselves individual souls, perfect, in complete union with God, or parts of Him but not Himself in whole?

(b) If they were one with God, why did they come to have seeming separateness from God; how

could they have free will when, while they were still one with God, obviously God's will alone could have existed? In other words, there was a time when only God existed; so He had to create one or several separate souls for them to be able to have both free will and ego-consciousness,—illusion of separateness. Why did he do that, thereby allowing perfection to become imperfect?

(c) Was the reason for our present veil of ignorance an error or sin committed by discarnate—bodiless—souls, or was it committed by incarnate souls, that is, human beings?

(d) You said the reason for our ignorance is mystery, the answer to which can be obtained only by Realisation. Are we to understand by that that you know the reason, but you either do not consider it good for us to be replied to, or you know it, but it is something which cannot be expressed in human language?

(e) When we have achieved complete Realisation, will we obtain an answer to all our present questions and problems, or will we, instead of obtaining the answer, only cease to wish to obtain it, being content in our state of perfect happiness?

Ramdas : In the first place, shall Ramdas ask if it is worth-while to worry ourselves about these questions? These are questions which Theology tries to solve. Ours is not to find out why the world is there, why human beings are as they are, how God has created this universe, and all such things. How far they will help us in our spiritual evolution is a doubtful matter. However, Ramdas will try to give brief

answers to these questions, though he cannot promise he will be able completely to satisfy the friend who has put these questions.

THE ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE VIEW-POINTS

Ramdas has said in one of his talks yesterday, or the day before, that the vast universal manifestation that we see before us is not a creation, but only a projection from the Divine. We have to look at this manifestation from two standpoints,—the absolute and the relative. From the relative standpoint, we as human beings see that there is a law working in the universe which is one of cause and effect. Whatever we do has a reaction on us ; if we do good, we get good fruits, and if we do evil, we get evil fruits.

The aim of every one of us is happiness, and this we can get only when we adjust our life according to certain rules which make us free from the reaction that is responsible for our unhappiness. To be free from the tangle of action and reaction, the approach must be to a state which is of eternal happiness and peace. This eternal happiness and peace we call God or Truth. As we approach this goal, we become more and more happy, and as we recede from it, we become more and more unhappy. So it behoves us to adjust the conduct of our life in such a way that we are fit to achieve this supreme aim and purpose of life,—viz., eternal happiness and peace.

AN ASTOUNDING ASSERTION

When we have attained the supreme happiness and peace and look back to the starting point of our life, we

find that we had all along been playing by putting on a veil and pretending that we were far away, or separate from that happiness. The whole play is a divine play, in which that Supreme Truth, which is all happiness and peace, was all along seeking Itself. This is from the absolute standpoint.

All these go to show that God Himself has put on a mask of ignorance, seeks Himself, and by an apparent evolution from a state of ignorance to a state of knowledge, removes the veil. So the soul that struggles to realise itself is He, and the liberated soul, who is one with Him, is also He. This is an astounding assertion made by those who have realised God. They say : "The sinner is He and the saint is He." In the inner core of the being of both the saint and the sinner, God dwells but on the surface He plays two different parts,—one as the sinner and the other as the saint. On the face of it, this declaration seems to be absurd or unacceptable. But this is absolutely true from the view-point of the Divine, who has become everything and everybody and by whose will everything happens.

SEPARATENESS ONLY APPARENT

The sense of separateness with which the second question deals, is really not there, but apparently seems to be there. God has become everything and everybody. It is His will alone that prevails. As Ramdas has already said, there are two standpoints to be considered,—one the human standpoint and the other God's standpoint. We have to take only God's standpoint as the correct one. Man in his ignorance

thinks that he is not divine, but when he realises that he is so, he finds that the separation was utterly false. It is only a play in which there is the so-called ignorance and the so-called knowledge. In both the cases it is He who plays the two parts, and there is nothing like ignorance or knowledge. Whatever is, is He and He alone.

IGNORANCE HAS NO REALITY

From what Ramdas has said about the soul and God and their relative connection, it is very clear that the existence of ignorance is a mystery. This is the experience of those who have realised God. So Ramdas is puzzled whether he should speak from the standpoint of God or of an ignorant man. So far as his knowledge goes, it is evident that ignorance has no existence at all. If we try to find out the cause of ignorance, we cannot trace it because the origin is hidden in the mists of eternity and infinity. If the eternal and infinite God has become everything, ignorance can have nothing to do with His manifestation. It is not that inadequacy of language or expression confounds us here; because we are speaking about a thing that does not exist.

As to the last question Ramdas would say that, after realisation, all these questions automatically disappear. So the best way to get these questions solved is to realise God.

RELIGIOUS TRAINING FOR CHILDREN

Q: You said the other day, for the education of children we should develop in them a faith in God. I

should like to know what that God-theory is,—faith in a transcendent God or faith in God within them ?

Ramdas : God is within and without. It is to that God they must pray. There are no two Gods, one transcendent and one inherent. The same God who is immanent is also transcendent—immanent, in the sense that He is omni-present, pervading the entire universe and also seated in the hearts of every one of us. Being this, He is at the same time beyond the universe, extending to infinity. He is the Spirit, He is Consciousness, He is Truth which has no name, form or change. He is infinite and eternal Presence, vibrant with pure knowledge, light, power, and love. It is to this God we have to pray. By remembering Him through prayer, we infuse into ourselves his power and glory by which we can dispel from the mind all thoughts which are selfish, which seek to gain for ourselves something at the expense of our fellow-beings. Selfishness makes our life erratic, restless and agitated, and therefore, unhappy and miserable.

For children it may not be possible to concentrate on the impersonal God. But they can pray and surrender themselves to the Personal forms of God. There are so many great incarnations and prophets in the world, who are embodiments of this omnipotent Spirit. These Teachers are the personal aspects of the Divine. The children may be brought into contact with them, so that by praying to these great personalities, they may derive the strength, light and peace essential for their true happiness. For Christians, Jesus is the very embodiment of God ; for the Hindus, Rama,

Krishna and Shiva ; and for the Muslims, prophet Mohammed. In every faith they have their own great Masters who founded their religion, and such Masters may be taken as the very incarnations of Divinity. In this way the children can, by praying to their respective Teachers, invoke their blessings and live in perfect righteousness, truthfulness, honesty and self-sacrifice. They can develop these qualities only by tuning themselves with God, who is represented on earth by these great Teachers. By loving God they can draw from Him the strength to walk always on the path of truth and drive out of their minds all evil thoughts that lead them astray.

This is perfectly true and has been verified by so many teachers who are training children in schools and who have brought them in contact with God and enabled them to draw inspiration from Him. The lives of such children have become blessed. God seems to have entered in their daily life and purified them in every way, because they are so loving and helpful to all around them. The other day we saw a child walking on the street. He found a small worm crawling on the road, slowly took it up with a stick and laid it aside fearing that it might otherwise be trampled upon. This kind of love is so ennobling and shows the heart of the child and how it feels for the suffering of others. So, if each one of us can teach children to commune with God, have a relationship with Him, look upon Him as Mother or Master, we shall make them fit to receive His grace.

Q : What is the meaning of "Om Tat Sat"?

Ramdas : Every Mantra contains so many words and names of God and totally stands for God. God is said to be Mantra-Swaroopa, embodiment of Mantra. With that conception, the Mantra has to be repeated. But the words that compose the Mantra have also separate meanings, which Ramdas has already explained the other day.

REPEAT MANTRA WITH LOVE

Q : When we repeat the Mantra without knowing the actual meaning, do we get the same results ?

Ramdas : If we repeat the Mantra with the knowledge that it stands for God, it will give us the best effect that is expected by such repetition and it will be done with all love. If the repetition is parrot-like, we shall not be able to repeat it even for five minutes, as by so doing we will not derive the full joy of it. When we repeat the Mantra with love, we are charmed with the sound of it. The rhythm produced by it brings a strange peace to us ; the vibrations caused by it have a healing effect upon the mind. Therefore it is said that even if we repeat, without knowing the meaning of the Name, it produces the desired effect on us. When we tread upon a hot or burning cinder whether knowingly or unknowingly, it burns us. So, whether we know the meaning or not, as the Name itself is imbued with a certain power, it cannot but act on us, bringing peace and harmony. If we repeat the Mantra with love and also knowing the meaning of it, it will be much better.

THE EFFECT OF MUSIC :

Q : What about non-civilised persons who get into states of ecstasy, dancing, etc. ? Is this divine or anything else ?

Ramdas : It is a mental or emotional exultation which comes and goes just as a beautiful scenery creates in our mind a sense of harmony and peace which is not lasting. So also, when we hear sweet music, it lulls our mind and we feel an inner joy for some time. These are all mental states which have nothing to do with spirituality. But when that music is identified with the Divine, it will take us to the inner recesses of our mind, where a spiritual radiance is seen or felt, and that in turn takes us deep into our real being,—God.

Music by itself has a charming effect on the mind. Perhaps you are aware how the deer are caught in the forest. What they do in India is, they take a flute with them and go to the forest where there are deer and, standing behind a tree, play on it. The deer in the vicinity, attracted by the music, stand still to listen to it. Their mind is so concentrated on the sweet sound that they become oblivious of their body and surroundings. Taking this opportunity a man goes near them and puts a rope round the neck of each of them and they are all caught. This goes to prove that music has a lulling effect on the mind. If you take God's name, sing for yourself and listen to the tune, your wandering mind becomes still immediately. Snake-charmers play on a pipe, on hearing which the serpent is charmed and becomes quiet. So also, when

our mind is attuned to the music of God's name, it will cease wandering and come under control.

DON'T PUT THE CART BEFORE THE HORSE

Q : Before we take to Yoga, whether Bhakti or Karma, is it necessary that we should first of all purify our mind ?

Ramdas : This is putting the cart before the horse, because Yoga is practised in order to attain purity of mind. If you have purity of mind, there is no need for you to practise Yoga.

We go to God dirty and unclean. By His grace we must be purified. So we must practise some Yoga by which God may, by His grace, purify us. By our own effort we cannot purify ourselves. We have known this after repeated attempts. When we sit for meditation we find that our mind wanders. But with great effort we might be able to still it for a moment or two. Again it goes into the whirlpool, entertaining thoughts which it ought not to. How can we get rid of all these thoughts and how can we purify the mind except by His grace ?

Grace can be had only by having a keen aspiration for God. This is the first thing necessary,—the aspiration to unite ourselves with Him. This longing should seize our heart. Then it will enable us to draw strength, inspiration and light from Him by which we may be purified and the darkness within us dispelled. Now we are conscious of His grace. Yoga means union with God. Yoga can be attained by following various

paths. The simple path that easily takes us to Him is Bhakti Yoga.

GRACE IS EVERYTHING

Q: Many people were advised not to take to the practice of Raja Yoga or Hatha Yoga before they had reached a certain degree of moral purification.

Ramdas: How can any immoral man become moral? This does not seem to be possible by one's own efforts. He makes resolutions to lead a virtuous life, but the next moment he breaks them. He commits sin, although he knows that by doing so he is causing grievous wrong to himself and others. He has no strength to control himself. So how can he become moral unless he invokes some higher force to destroy those evil elements that torment him? By his own feeble strength he will not be able to fight those formidable forces that seek to drag him to ruin. By the help of a higher force alone he can successfully defeat those evil elements.

Therefore, at the very start we have to draw strength and inspiration from God. Then alone we will be truly moral, pure, fit to achieve immortality by union with Him. We may pass through many arduous disciplines such as the practice of pranayama, asanas, frequent fasts, self-mortification, living in solitude and many other rigorous austerities. But the failure of these disciplines goes only to show that we as individuals are nothing and our power and will are absolutely of no avail, and we come to recognise our complete helplessness and the supremacy of God's will and power. His grace alone can elevate and illumine us.

PRIDE OF SADHANA IS AN OBSTACLE

Before knowing this, we had the pride that we would be able to realise God by our own efforts. But now we realise that we shall be able to receive His grace only when we lay aside our pride and bend ourselves before Him in complete self-effacement and total dedication. Many have been striving for years and years and performing rigorous sadhanas and disciplines in solitude, but those have only tended to heighten their pride which has not enabled them to come any the nearer to God. On the other hand it has led to their downfall. So we must completely destroy egoism.

THE EXAMPLE OF VISWAMITRA

In the Hindu scriptures mention is made of a great sage called Viswamitra. He performed austerities for thousands of years, but succumbed to temptations and fell, because he was so proud of his austerities.

There is also another story about Viswamitra. There was a discussion between him and sage Vasishta, the Guru of Sri Rama. The discussion was whether power of austerities or power of the company of saints was greater. Vasishta said that the power of the company of saints was greater. Viswamitra disagreed with him. The matter was brought before Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu directed them to Mahashesha, the big Serpent on whose head this earthly globe is supposed to be resting. This has some esoteric meaning. They say the centre of gravity of the earth or the power that draws everything towards the earth and keeps the earth intact, that centrifugal or cohesive force, is

symbolised by Mahashesha. We are not concerned with it at present.

The sages went to Mahashesha and asked him which power was greater,—company of saints or austerities. Mahashesha said: "I have this heavy burden of the earth on my head. If you will just lift it for a moment from my head I will be free to give you the answer." At this, Vasishta and Viswamitra looked at each other as to how best this problem could be solved. Viswamitra suggested that he would apply the power that he had gained by his austerities and lift the earth. He tried, but the earth did not move. He put all the strength he had gained by his tapasya, but he could not succeed. Then Vasishta came forward and, applying the strength which he had got by one minute's company of saints, lifted the earth. One minute of Satsanga had given him sufficient power to lift the earth. Now Mahashesha said: "Your question has been answered."

GOD IS ONLY FOR THE HUMBLEST

It is not by our austerities that any great power can come to us; they will only increase our pride and make our ego stronger. But if we go to a saint, become free from the ego-sense by allowing our mind to be stilled by his presence, then it is that we have gained the most powerful force. If we are to struggle ourselves, we have to do so long and hard before the ego gets exhausted and admits that it cannot do anything and is nothing. So we struggle to know that by struggle alone we cannot attain God. When we

have known this we come to the end of our struggle and then His power comes to us. We have to be humble. The humblest one gets God. As aptly pointed out by Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, when rain falls, water collects in the valleys and not on the top of a hill. So all the virtues are in that person who is meek. Jesus has said : "Blessed are the meek ; for they shall inherit the earth." Let us therefore surrender ourselves to God and pray to Him to come to our help so that we may be free from the clutches of our lower nature.

DISCIPLINE TO KEEP UP GOD-REMEMBRANCE

The question arises why Ramdas himself was made to pass through so many strict disciplines and austerities. Ramdas here very carefully used the words 'made to pass,' because he never did anything himself, he was put to it by the Divine. The main object of all his disciplines, such as fasts, living in solitude, wandering freely over several parts of India, keeping vigils at night, etc., was to keep his mind ever thinking of God and being conscious of Him. These disciplines were not an end in themselves, but a means to an end. They were done to keep the flame of God-remembrance burning in his mind.

So, if you do any sadhana it must be to keep up God-remembrance continuously. Sadhana or discipline by itself cannot grant you anything. If it is done with a view to maintaining unbroken the stream of God-thought, so that no other thought can obtrude and create confusion in the mind, you will be alert always. Even this alertness can come only under certain

conditions, and these conditions must be created by God for you. We see in the Hindu scriptures the assurance given by God to the effect that he who wants to remain constantly in His remembrance, and strives to do it at all times, will be provided with all the means necessary for it, namely, the necessary company, environments and conditions favourable for His remembrance. He must be tremendously sincere. Then God provides everything necessary for this advancement.

REMEMBRANCE COMES BY GRACE

God's remembrance can come to our mind only through His grace. Otherwise, how can we remember Him? There are so many who are striving, but His grace has not come to them. They are like fish out of water, pining and pining for Him. When God's grace comes, the stream of remembrance flows into their mind continuously, and everything necessary is done to maintain the remembrance. The remembrance must be unbroken like a "*thaila dhara*", which means the flow of oil. When oil is poured from one vessel to another, you see it flows unbroken. The moment there is a break in the remembrance of God, at once the ego-sense takes possession of us and darkness sets in.

So Ramdas was praying to God: "O God, keep your remembrance in my mind ceaselessly." The result was that God gave him Satsang, because in the company of saints it was easy to remember God. He also got such food as was conducive to keep him awake all night, because sleep depends mainly upon the food we take. God made him take only a very

small quantity of food. Every minute Ramdas was in a state of fear lest he should forget Him any time. He ran into solitude for the purpose. Company of worldly-minded men was not conducive to remembrance of God.

GOD-MADNESS ENSURES REMEMBRANCE

God did all these things for Ramdas. Ramdas was further praying to God: "O God, make me stark mad of Thee". It is God-madness that makes us remember Him constantly. For, if He possesses us, we cannot forget Him. Until then we must go on repeating His name. When Ramdas was in this state of madness, a friend said to him: "By repeating God's name you are running mad. You must give it up". But Ramdas replied: "No. He will repeat it so incessantly that he will make the very walls in this room vibrate with the Name." This was the determination which God gave him at that time. That is how God has made him what he is. By His grace alone Ramdas was made to enter this path, by His grace alone he was made to walk on it, and by His grace alone he reached the goal.

HOW TO DRIVE OUT THE EGO-SENSE

Q: About getting rid of egoism, should we take God to be a separate entity from us, or should we consider Him as dwelling in us? If we think God is within us, will it not develop stronger ego-sense in us?

Ramdas: God is the all-pervading Reality. If you take Him as such and know Him within you, then

necessarily the ego-sense will not stand before His august presence. If you take Him to be a personal God, it is likely that you may become proud. Your aim is completely to eradicate the ego-sense and that should be done by meditating on Him as the all-pervading Reality, dwelling not only in your heart, but also in the heart of everybody else in the universe. Individual sense disappears when the universal sense dawns in you. Universal sense is the nature of the Divine and individual sense is the nature of the ego. As a man thinketh so he becometh. If you think of the Universal, your consciousness will become universal. If you think you are the body, you will ever be bound to the physical plane.

JNANA DESTROYS KARMA

Q: About accumulated Karma, can they be exhausted by successive births only, or is there any other means?

Ramdas: The soul, when passing through several births, takes with it the accumulated Karma to be experienced during the subsequent lives, until it gets liberated. A soul that takes birth now comes with some accumulated Karma to be experienced in this life. If it attains liberation in this life itself, the remaining Karma to be gone through will be destroyed. Thus, there will be no Karma to be experienced for the next birth, and he will not be born again. Any Karma done after God-realisation does not bind the soul. It is washed away then and there, because there is no ego to which it can attach itself. Now Karma becomes

divine and the liberated soul becomes a divine worker. The Karma which is called Prarabdha that has to be experienced in this life, will have to be gone through even after Realisation. But this will affect the Jivan Mukta only so far as the body is concerned. For example, he may get some disease of the body. But the mind not being there, he will have no worries or anxieties on account of it. People may blame him or praise him. He may have losses or gains, but he remains unaffected by them. So, in a sense, he has destroyed the Karma that would affect him mentally. Or it may be said he has triumphed over Karma because he remains unaffected by it. But that Karma which will affect his body may still work and consequently the body may suffer. Since he has transcended the body idea, he feels: "I am not suffering, it is only the body that suffers." He knows he is the immortal, free spirit, unaffected by anything that happens to his body, or by the loss of anything that he had at one time possessed, because after God-realisation he does not own anything in the world.

The Bhagavad Gita says :

समदुःखसुखः स्वस्थः समलोढाश्मकांचनः ।
 तुल्यप्रियाप्रियो धीरस्तुल्यनिन्दात्मसंस्तुतिः ॥
 मानापमानयोस्तुल्यस्तुल्यो मित्रारिपक्षयोः ।
 सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी गुणातीतः स उच्यते ॥

"Alike in pleasure and pain, abiding in the Self, regarding a clod of earth, a stone and gold alike; the same to agreeable and disagreeable, wise, the

same to praise and blame ; the same in honour and dishonour, the same to friend and foe, who initiates no action he is said to have gone beyond the Gunas."

(Ch. XIV, 24 and 25)

Pleasure and pain are the same to him. He is always contented within. He remains in a state of perfect Samatwa, or equilibrium. This is the condition of the Siddha or perfected soul who has found God, who has realised God and who lives, moves and has his being in God, every second of his life.

THE ESSENCE OF RAMDAS' MESSAGE

Q : This is your last meeting with us here. Don't you think you have to choose your own topic and decide what you are going to say ?

Ramdas : Ramdas has told you practically everything he had to say. He has emphasised again and again the importance of taking the holy name of God. He can tell you that it is a key that opens the gate to the realm of perfect happiness, peace and freedom. He who has tuned his mind to the name of God and is conscious of His presence within and everywhere about him, has achieved the goal of life. What more can Ramdas tell you ?

ANIMALS TOO HAVE SOULS

Q : What part do animals play in creation ? Many people think that man can be re-born as an animal. Does that mean animals have souls ?

Ramdas : Soul resides in all creatures and things in the world. Because of the obscurity caused by Rajas and Tamas, the light and power of the soul is not fully revealed. In animals there are souls, but these are partially hidden so that you do not notice them, and the animals themselves are not aware of them. But under favourable conditions, the soul becomes more manifest when the animals assume human bodies. In other words, animals evolve gradually to higher species and, in course of time, assume human bodies in which there is a possibility for the Divine to manifest Himself.

It is possible for the human beings to rise beyond the lower two Gunas, Rajas and Tamas, which cover the soul and prevent them from becoming aware of it. It can also be said that human beings, who are completely under the control of the lower two Gunas and live a degraded life, bring about their fall and are re born as animals. So, by proper discrimination and aspiration, followed by discipline, we can rise from Rajas and Tamas. These two Gunas make us oblivious of our real nature. But when we rise to Sattwa-guna, which is purity and harmony, we become conscious that we are not merely the physical body, but also the soul and the all-pervading Spirit. In that state, our contact with God becomes a definite experience with us, and that state is possible only in the human body.

So animals have souls. But they can have the experience of God only after they assume a human body through the process of natural evolution, for which God alone is responsible. It is not by our own effort that

we evolve, but by God's grace. In some mysterious way, His power works for bringing about the evolution from lower to higher life, until it reaches the apex of human life. In this human life it is that we can lift ourselves above the lower nature and rising superior to them, become fit vehicles through whom the power and glory of God may be revealed. In the Hindu scriptures, it is said that the human body is the gateway to immortality. This is perfectly true. It is also said the soul is sleeping in stones, active in vegetables and animals, and awake in man.

EVERY ONE MUST REACH THE GOAL

Q: Will all mankind reach the super-conscious state, one day, through evolution?

Ramdas: That is our prayer to God.

Q: Does that not happen inevitably by re-incarnation?

Ramdas: By the mere fact that a man is re-born it does not mean that he is consciously evolving. But we are all on the road that leads to ultimate liberation. Everybody has to reach, one day or another, that supreme state. One may reach there earlier, another later, but everybody will ultimately attain that goal. It is inevitable.

CIVILISED SAVAGES !

Q: Is there a particular race of people among whom the soul incarnates in the human being for the first time?

Ramdas : No. The soul may take its first human birth anywhere. No particular race or country is singled out for the first manifestation of the soul in the human body.

Q : There are some tribes in Africa who are not advanced and who can be very well classed among animals.

Ramdas : There are some so-called civilised people also who do not remember God and live such bestial life that they cannot be called human beings.

Q : Is it correct to say that there is a particular race who live below the ground and may one day kill us all ? I have read a book where the author writes about this race.

Ramdas : Does the author mean white-ants ?

DIFFERENCES IN ANIMAL INTELLIGENCE

Q : Are there animal species which are nearer to human incarnations than others ?

Ramdas : We can see more wisdom in some animals like elephants, horses, cows, dogs, etc., than in others. Some animals which we tame and keep in our houses are amenable to training, but some are not. For instance, we try to train donkeys. It is very difficult to make them understand, We cannot guide them except by beating them. In India, the washerman's ass or donkey is used for carrying clothes for washing. On the road it always goes on the wrong side, and however much the washerman may teach, it does not follow the right path. But if a dog is taught, it understands and always acts up to it. From this we

can say that some animals are more intelligent than others. Although they cannot talk, they understand and they act as we wish them to do, even when we ask them to do things for the first time. This shows that these animals have evolved higher than those which are dull and stupid and cannot take instructions or be guided.

WHAT IS INTUITION ?

Q : You said that intellect has limitations. Between intellect and intuition is there a gate, break or continuity ?

Ramdas : Intuition is the outcome of the harmony of an illumined intellect and a purified heart. The working of the intellect and the working of the heart dissolve into intuition. Intuition always guides you aright, because anything you do through intuition stands the test of illumined reason and purified heart. It is unerring in its guidance and effect. So long as intuition does not dawn on you it is better that you are guided by reason. Intellect must as far as possible guide you on the right path. It may make a mistake, but intuition does not. Intuition is nothing but God's voice speaking through you.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WORKING OF INTELLECT AND INTUITION

Q : How can we make out whether any promptings that come to us are of the intellect or of intuition ?

Ramdas : Very often we fall into that error. When intuition works, our ego-sense is absent. But when

the intellect is working, the ego-sense is there. This is a state which a person who has attained the inner experience alone can clearly understand. A man who is guided by intuition and does certain things may be mistaken by others as having been guided by, or having acted according to, the promptings of reason. It is very difficult for others to know. One can find it out to some extent from what such a person does or says. His words and actions should be perfectly unselfish in character. But it is difficult to know if he really satisfies this test.

So we cannot judge whether the talk or action of the person is the outcome of intuition or reason. He who has experienced that state can alone know it. When a man who is guided by intuition is about to do something for the good of others, no amount of persuasion to the contrary will have any effect on him. Even if such action is likely to invite death to himself, he will not mind. He says : "God asks me to do it, and I do it." Such action is for the good of humanity, but in the eyes of some it may appear to be harmful, and they may try to dissuade him. That is why you find some great souls were even prepared to die for the cause they espoused and did not swerve from it even though they were threatened with death. There are such cases in India and in several other parts of the world.

EXAMPLES OF MARTYRDOM

Shall Ramdas mention the names of a few such great souls ? In India Mahatma Gandhi and Dayanand

Saraswati are a few recent instances and there are many more saints who stand out having sacrificed themselves for a great cause. We have Jesus in Palestine who, though dissuaded from preaching the truth for which he came to the world, could not help doing so. He said: "I am about my Father's business". If He had recanted He could have saved His life, but He was never one to recant. He had to obey God's command. Intuition was truly guiding Him. He was a fit servant of God come on earth to do His work.

Similarly, there was Socrates in Greece. When he was in prison and about to be given poison, his disciples tried their best to save him by arranging for his escape at night. But Socrates would not agree. He would not compromise truth. He would not go back upon the great principle that he preached — that Soul is immortal and body is perishable. If he ran away he would be denying the Truth he preached. Such persons are always fearless. They are even prepared to face death and when it comes remain unperturbed, because they know death is only to the body and not to the soul which is immortal. Again, we may remind ourselves of Mansur, the great Sufi saint who died for the sake of Truth. He was calling himself God. He said "Anal Huq" (I am God). This was sacrilege or blasphemy in the opinion of the Muslim King. For this reason, Mansur was impaled. He allowed himself to be impaled, but would not give up saying what he had realised to be true.

In India also, besides Mahatma Gandhi and Dayanand Saraswati innumerable saints have under-

gone a world of suffering and persecution at the hands of people who did not agree with them. They bravely suffered but never gave up Truth. Such are the dedicated souls whom God uses for the good of humanity. They do everything through intuition.

Q : Can we say the universal truth is in evolution ? What is true for the child may not be true for the adult.

Ramdas : That may be on the material plane, but on the spiritual plane what is true for the child must be true for the adult.

ORAL JAPA AND LIKHIT JAPA COMPARED

Q : You spoke to us about many kinds of Japa. What about written Japa ?

Ramdas : For some people, written Japa — Likhit Japa — serves as a means of rapid concentration because, when they write, their eyes are also fixed there. Otherwise, in oral Japa, they have to close their eyes. Even when they close their eyes, the mind runs in all directions, and if they open their eyes their sight distracts the mind and the Japa becomes mechanical. So, when they look at the words they write, one after another, they can concentrate better on the Japa. Those who write say that by the time they write once, they mentally or orally repeat the same Mantra seven or eight times. That is the experience of Mataji. By the time she writes Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram once, she repeats it mentally eight times. So there is great benefit in writing the Mantra. Ramdas had not to write it himself. He was simply chanting Ramnam.

There are disadvantages also in the written Japa. That is, we must have a book, a pen and ink, and if the ink is exhausted, we have to run for the ink-bottle and so much time is wasted. Further, all these articles cost money and we have to pay for them. Besides, we have to be sitting at one place for writing, whereas oral repetition can be done at all times,—sitting, walking, running, travelling, lying down and in any place. So, the latter method is more advantageous than writing the Mantra.

ALL MANTRAS HAVE THE SAME POWER

Q : Is the same power derived by repeating all Mantras ?

Ramdas : Yes. What is needed is that our mind must be in tune with God, whichever the Mantra may be. As Ramakrishna Paramahansa has said, Sandhya Vandana, that is, the spiritual practice which the Hindus do three times a day, ultimately resolves itself into the repetition of the Mantra known as 'Gayatri' which is the heart of the Sandhya ritual. That is, the whole routine need not be gone through. He also says that Gayatri reduces itself to OM ; that is, if we simply repeat 'OM', we get the benefit of Gayatri and the whole of Sandhya Vandana. 'OM' resolves itself into Samadhi. Other Mantras also should produce the same effect. Any name of God should take us to the supreme goal provided we have faith. If there is no faith we cannot make much progress by mere repetition of the Mantra.

Q : If the Mantra is repeated incessantly, but not properly, I feel it will not only have no good effect, but may have an evil effect.

Ramdas : Ramdas thinks there may not be any evil effects, but good effects may not be as much as one would expect of the Mantra. In the case of Valmiki he was asked to repeat "Rama, Rama", but he went on repeating "Mara, Mara". Even then he became a great sage. You may repeat any Name with full faith and it is sure to do you good. That is most important.

USE OF ROSARY IN JAPA

Q : Has the rosary, as used in the Christian tradition, the same effect as Japa without it ?

Ramdas : Hindus also use the rosary. The power is the same. If we use the rosary, our mind may be distracted by counting the beads, or to see how many times we have done the Japa. In the course of Ramdas' wandering in the first year of his Sadhana, he met a Sadhu who bought two rosaries, one for himself and the other for Ramdas, and asked Ramdas to use one of them. Ramdas agreed, took it from him. but found he could not make use of it. Anyhow, he kept it with him, because the Sadhu wanted him to have it. The Sadhu followed Ramdas from place to place, looking after him tenderly. One fine morning, when we started from a place and walked about a furlong, Ramdas suddenly remembered that he had left the rosary behind. He told the Sadhu about it. The Sadhu replied that he also had left his rosary behind, and we both went

without it. Thereafter, up to this day, Ramdas has had no rosary and he is none the worse for it. This does not mean Ramdas is belittling the use of the rosary. You may by all means use it. It helps in counting the Japa. It is good for those who have faith in the rosary to keep an account of their Japa. Some great saints in India also had rosaries.

CAUTION ABOUT PRANAYAMA

Q : When I was a child of 12 years, on reading the books of Swami Vivekananda, I practised Pranayama with long Kumbhaka. One day when practising in solitude I fainted, and my parents could not find me out and they had to use a dog to find me out. As a doctor now, I am inclined to attribute that fainting to fatigue. Is there anything psychical about it ?

Ramdas : It is not merely physical, it is also psychical. The effect of Pranayama, if not done under proper guidance, is directly on the mind stuff, though physical disorders also may take place. Pranayama is done principally for the control of the mind, but incidentally it can tone up the nerves and thereby strengthen the physical system also. In your case, the mind became blank through practice of long Kumbhaka, which produced the fainting. Therefore it is not Pranayama which was at fault, but the way in which it was done.

Raja Yoga has been held to be one of the most effective ways of controlling the mind and stilling its waves. It is misunderstood and misapplied, with the result that it has done more harm than good to people.

Ramdas has, in the course of his earlier talks, referred to Pranayama and emphasised the dangers of Kumbhaka. Long Kumbhaka is not a desirable practice. At first it may seem to be helpful, but in the end it proves to be harmful. It is only when we are guided by a competent Guru, who can watch us from step to step, that we are safe. By reading books alone we should never start practising Pranayama, as that will have disastrous effects on us.

EVOLUTION AND RETROGRESSION

Q : Does spiritual evolution go ever forward, or, are there times when it goes back ? I am thinking of the evolution both of the individual and of the world as a whole.

Ramdas : That which applies to the individual applies to the world also, because the world is made up of individuals. What is true of the individual must be true of entire humanity. Just as there is advancement or progress, there is retrogression also. That is inevitable. We cannot always move in a straight line right up to the goal. We sometimes go backward. Certain forces of nature drag us back, and in spite of our resistance we fail to conquer them. We succumb to those forces and go backward. But we can recover the lost ground and go forward. When we are about to fall, if grace holds us, we are safe. Otherwise, we may go back even to the animal state. You must have read the life of a great Hindu king who came to be known as Jada Bharata. He was deeply attached to an animal and he had to assume the form of that

animal in his succeeding birth. This is not mere mythology, but a fact. Just as a good man who has lived a pure life for some time becomes bad, under some evil influences, there is a possibility of his reverting to the animal life according to his own deeds. This is so only in rare cases. Generally, however, there is always an upward trend or progress in the movement of nature.

MENTAL DEFECTS NO BAR TO EVOLUTION

Q : What happens to the soul of somebody who has lost all his mental faculty ?

Ramdas : The soul is not lost. The progress for the time being is stopped, but when he takes birth again he will pursue the path and go forward.

Q : In this case, has the soul not already divorced the body ?

Ramdas : There is only some derangement of the brain and the progress is temporarily arrested, as there is no conscious effort on his part in the direction of spiritual progress. The influence of general evolution, the urge to go forward, is, of course, there. And this, together with the force of his previous Sadhanas, will take him onward.

THE STATE OF PERFECT EQUANIMITY

Q : When we endeavour to walk on the path to equanimity, which outwardly looks like indifference, how can we be sure that we are moving towards equanimity and not indifference ?

Ramdas : Equanimity is born of the awareness of the Divine within us. As the light of God dawns on us, our likes and dislikes disappear and we look upon and love everybody equally. In the process we, who were so far selfish, become less and less so, and become entirely free from selfishness in the end. We give ourselves away to others, more and more, when they are in distress, irrespective of their being within our family circle or outside it. So our vision is widened and our field of activity is extended. This is how we attain a state of equanimity or equality.

PRACTICE IS NECESSARY

Q : You have brought very much to us and it was good to see one like you who accepted to speak to us many days in succession. Each one of us will keep what you gave us during every one of these hours, very deep in our hearts, all the more as we shall not have another opportunity.

Ramdas : What Ramdas has told you is not to be simply kept in your heart. But you should translate those ideas into practice in your daily life as far as you can and leave the rest in the hands of God. In fact, Ramdas would have you live your life for the sake of God. Then you will never do anything wrong. This is possible when you have constant remembrance of Him, until that remembrance develops into a consciousness when your life, both internal and external, will become thoroughly divine and all activities that you perform will be pure, selfless and therefore conducive to your own happiness as well as that of others.

BLESSINGS

Ramdas is supremely happy he had occasion to come in contact with so many friends here. Every day they have been sitting before him with love and attention, to listen to his words with all faith and devotion. Before leaving this place, Ramdas invokes God's blessings on all of you so that your search for God may be fulfilled and that you may feel His presence within you and everywhere about you, making your life supremely blessed.

Q : Shall we all sing Ramnam together for about ten minutes before we close this meeting?

Ramdas : Yes, we shall.

The meeting closed after the collective chanting of Ramnam.

GERMANY

FRANKFURT, 6th September 1954.

Place : Residence of Dr. Gunter Zuhlsdorf.

WHAT IS VEDANTA ?

Questioner : Will you tell us something about Vedanta ?

Ramdas : Yes. Vedanta means the end of the Vedas, i.e., the end of knowledge. Vedanta leads you to the realisation of God in all His aspects. The Bhagavad Gita is based upon Vedanta. The Gita teaches us the way to realise God.

Nominally there are three paths described in the Gita for realising God—Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Karma Yoga. Bhakti Yoga teaches you how to devote yourself to God and surrender to Him completely, thus finding union with Him. Jnana Yoga teaches you to find out the source of your life, viz., the Atman or God, and to realise that you are That—the Atman. Karma Yoga teaches you to dedicate all your actions to God and thereby free yourself from the ego-sense to realise Him.

Although these paths seem to be different, really they are all one. Bhakti Yoga is the purification of the heart and giving all your love to God and becoming one with Him. Jnana Yoga is the illumination of your intellect and the realisation that you are He. Karma Yoga is the dedication of all your actions to the Lord and thus finding union with Him. So Bhakti Yoga

relates to the heart, Jnana Yoga to the intellect, and Karma Yoga to the body. But all lead to the attainment of the same goal.

In order to attain Purna Yoga, the all-comprehensive or integral Yoga, you must totally belong to God in heart, intellect and body. In this realisation you know God not only as the static, all-pervading Spirit, but also as the dynamic power in the vast universe before you. So you behold God both as the unseen and the seen in His static and dynamic aspects. This is the highest realisation of God. In this state your eyes behold only God everywhere, from your heart goes out love to all alike and you enjoy everlasting peace and bliss. This is the goal to which Vedanta leads you.

POWER OF RAM MANTRA

Q : I heard you say some Mantra this evening. Please tell us something about it.

Ramdas : The most difficult thing for a spiritual aspirant at the start is control of the mind. When the mind is restless and fickle, you cannot meditate on God. So you have to do something for practising concentration. Here repetition of the name of God is very helpful. Mantra is a combination of the names or attributes of God. When you tune your mind to the Mantra, you are in tune with God. Constant chanting of the Mantra grants you concentration and the consequent calmness and serenity. It destroys all evil desires and makes the mind perfectly pure. In the pure and still mind God reveals Himself.

Ramdas can say from his experience that by chanting the Mantra 'Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram', he attained perfect purity and from his heart now flows out love towards all beings. He is filled, by God's Grace, with unending joy and peace at all times. He has made Ramdas His child. Jesus has said, "Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven". Sri Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita that unless your mind is free from lust, greed and wrath, you cannot realise the Eternal. Lord Buddha says that unless you become pure in thought, word and deed you cannot attain Nirvana. So all the great Teachers declare that we must be pure and innocent and then only we shall attain liberation and eternal peace. This supreme state is achieved by repeating Ram Mantra.

Q: What is the name of your Guru ?

Ramdas : Balakrishna Rao. He was his father also. He became the Guru.

Q: May I repeat this Mantra once as I think others here have not understood that ?

Ramdas : Yes, you may.

Q: (After repeating the Mantra). I also told them that if they repeat this Mantra for three hours every day they will get peace.

Ramdas : Very well. Mind will not then run here and there, but will go within and see God in the heart. They should repeat the Mantra with all love and devotion. It is a wonderful Mantra. It makes you like a child, innocent, pure and cheerful. Ramdas was repeating 'Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram' day and

night and going into ecstasies. God listens when you sing, He takes you to Himself and makes you like Himself.

Q : Is the word 'Ram' an abbreviation of Rama ?

Ramdas : Ramchandra is the full name. In some places He is called Ram and in other places Rama. Both mean the same.

STEPS TO GOD-REALISATION

Q : When you repeat this Mantra do you concentrate in heart ?

Ramdas : You can concentrate in the heart, or in the centre between the eyebrows. If you want to develop love for God, you have to take the heart as the centre.

Q : Do you mean the physical heart ?

Ramdas : Ramana Maharshi says that this heart is on the right side and it is the psychic heart. It has nothing to do with the physical heart.

Q : So we have to concentrate on the right side.

Ramdas : That is right.

Q : I should like to know whether, besides chanting the Mantra, it is necessary to practise concentration and meditation. All of us here are very eager to hear something about meditation, because for us it is so very important.

Ramdas : Ramdas will tell you something about it. Before we close the meeting we shall also sit for five minutes in meditation. Meditation can come only when we have concentration. When the mind is fickle and runs in different directions, meditation is not

possible. In the mind there are so many waves rising and falling. We must make them all into one wave which should be the symbol of God within and finally that wave also must disappear. Then the mind becomes absolutely still. When the mind is still the body idea is lost. Then you realise that you are not the body, but the omnipresent Atman. This state is called Samadhi.

But this is not the whole truth about Samadhi. When you come out of Samadhi, you behold the whole universe as God. You must remain always in Samadhi. This unbroken Samadhi is called Sahaja Samadhi wherein you are in that divine superconscious state, while talking, walking or doing anything else. Now there is no such thing as going into Samadhi or coming out of it. This is God-realisation. Meditation is thus necessary. In meditation you transcend the body idea. The mind must be in tune with the infinite Truth. There must be for you only God and nothing but God. You must lose yourself in God. Thus you proceed from concentration to meditation, then to Samadhi and lastly to Sahaja Samadhi. These are the steps by which you attain God-realisation.

GOD MUST MAKE US WORK HARD FOR HIS VISION

Q: Is it possible for us here in Europe to go into Sahaja Samadhi?

Ramdas: If you have intense aspiration it is possible for you here in Europe, as it is possible for people in India. Everybody can have that if the aspiration for God is strong. God is everywhere and everybody has God in his heart, whether he knows it or not.

Q : People try to realise God, but they do not know that God is within their heart.

Ramdas : Yes, that is what is happening. You are He, but you don't know that. When you are awakened, at once you find out that you are He. There is a veil of ignorance separating you and God.

Q : I think one must work, work and work for the realisation of God. It is not very simple.

Ramdas : God must make us work hard for it.

Q : To realise God we have really to do intense work as you say. Ramakrishna Paramahansa himself had to struggle for many years till finally his Guru came and helped him.

Ramdas : Sri Ramakrishna did sadhana for twelve years. It was very difficult no doubt. But when God's grace comes, it is easy.

Q : I said it is difficult, but I like to do.

Ramdas : By God's grace everything is possible. We get His grace through saints. So contact of saints is necessary. There is a sloka in Sanskrit, written by Sri Sankaracharya :

सत्संगत्वे निस्संगत्वं निस्संगत्वे निर्मोहत्वम् ।

निर्मोहत्वे निश्चलतत्वं निश्चलतत्वे जीवन्मुक्तिः ॥

"From association with saints comes detachment from the world, from detachment springs freedom from delusion, freedom from delusion leads to one-pointed meditation on Truth, which in turn brings Jivanmukti or liberation in this life."

So the first thing necessary is the society of saints. When you contact the Guru and receive his blessings,

you get God's grace. God and Guru are not different. God Himself is the Guru.

OM MANI PADME HUM

Q : Should the Mantra be spoken in Indian or English language ?

Ramdas : The Rama Mantra is in Sanskrit. Ramdas will repeat it for you again. You can chant any other Mantra like 'Om Namō Narāyanaya, Om Namō Vasudevaya, Om Namah Sivaya, Om Mani Padme Hum'.

Q : What is the meaning of 'Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram' ?

Ramdas : Om = Impersonal Truth. Sri = Divine Power. Ram = God who is both Truth and Power. Jai Ram = Victory to God. Jai Jai Ram = Victory, Victory to Ram. When God is victorious in our heart, what happens is, all darkness disappears, ego-sense is conquered.

Q : What is the meaning of 'Om Mani Padme Hum' ?

Ramdas : This is a Buddhist Mantra. Mani means jewel. Padme (lotus) stands for heart. Nirvana is considered to be the jewel in the heart. To get at the jewel this Mantra is repeated.

Q : We need very much energy and one-pointedness to get the best results of the repetition of the Mantra.

Ramdas : Yes. You can overcome all temptations because the Mantra has power to create pure vibrations when it is chanted constantly. As all these are

harmonious vibrations, the impure desires and other weaknesses in us will be destroyed. Even when we know some of our desires to be bad, we still go on acting as prompted by them. By repeating the name of God, our will-power becomes so strong that when we are prompted to do evil action we will be able to say 'I won't do it'. We have now gained mastery over the mind. Otherwise we will do evil actions again and again, our mind becoming weaker and weaker. So the Mantra helps us to get the necessary strength. This strength is called Soul-force or Atmic force. For example, many people who were irritable have become calm and peaceful by taking to the repetition of the Mantra.

RAMDAS' CONTACT WITH RAMANA MAHARSHI

Q : Can you tell us something about your experience with Ramana Maharshi ?

Ramdas : Ramdas met Ramana Maharshi in the year 1922. Thirty-three years ago Ramdas left his place as a fakir, a wandering mendicant. He was continuously repeating 'Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram'. With this Mantra on his lips he wandered from place to place and was led by a Sadhu to Tiruvannamalai where Maharshi lived. Maharshi was sitting on a raised seat. He had only a loin-cloth and nothing else on his body. Ramdas paid his respects to him and sat down. A few minutes afterwards Ramdas got up, went near Maharshi and standing before him with folded hands prayed for his grace. Maharshi then looked into Ramdas' eyes intensely for one or two

minutes. Ramdas' whole body thrilled and he felt a joy which he could not express in words. Maharshi poured light and grace into Ramdas profusely through his eyes, and shook his head as much as to convey that he had answered Ramdas' prayer. He did not speak a word. From there Ramdas went straight to the Arunachala Hill and remained in a cave for twenty days. Day and night he was repeating the Ram Mantra without break. After twenty days, when he came out of the cave one morning, he saw the light of God everywhere. His eyes were filled with that light and he was full of joy and ecstasy. He now sees God everywhere and everybody as God. You are all God. Namaskars to you all.

THERE IS ONLY ONE

Q: The singing of the Mantra gives me great help.

Ramdas: It gave very great help also to Ramdas. Therefore he tells you that its power is great.

Q: The consciousness becomes so great that when we all sing together we feel the whole world is one.

Ramdas: Yes, it takes you straight to Adwaita. The whole world is one. That is inner illumination. God's power and God's light is everywhere. There is only One, there are no two.

Q: I wish we could sing together for some hours, but I am afraid to ask you, as it is already getting late.

Ramdas: Shall we sit for five minutes with eyes shut? Let us think of God in our heart and be still. May God's blessings be upon you all!

Reutlingen, 7th September 1954.

Place : Office of 'Bom Verlag', Pfullingen,
Conversation with Mr. K. O. Schmidt.

RAMDAS LOVES THE WHOLE WORLD

Q: (Mr. K. O. Schmidt) What do you think about Germany ? What is your impression ?

Ramdas : When God becomes your friend, the whole world is friendly to you. Ramdas meets only friends everywhere, because God has become his friend. All of you are his friends. Wherever he goes, whether it is in Switzerland, Germany or any other country, he sees his own Beloved. You are all his Beloved. If you love the whole world, the whole world loves you. If you see God within you, you see Him everywhere.

VEGETARIANISM

Q: What do you think about vegetarianism ? It is useful for concentration, is it not ? Are you a vegetarian ?

Ramdas : Yes, Ramdas is a vegetarian ? But he does not condemn non-vegetarians, among whom also there are devotees. He only tells them that if they want to concentrate their mind on God, vegetarian food will be helpful. It is Sattwic food. If one uses onions, garlic or chillies, one will find great disturbance in the mind and it will become restless. Meat also should be totally eschewed as it is Rajasic in nature and irritates the mind and proves a hindrance on the spiritual path. If you want concentration and contemplation on God,

it is better to take such food as will not create disturbance in the mind. Therefore, carefully selected food is considered most suitable for spiritual aspirants.

LOVE ANIMALS

Q: We have some friends who love animals. What do you think about them? Buddha says one should love all—animals, plants and everything. What is your opinion?

Ramdas: When your mind becomes pure, you do not like to harm any creature. When love overflows your heart, you cannot inflict any injury upon human beings, animals or plants.

Q: Animals are our own brothers.

Ramdas: Your heart is so full of love that you cannot hurt anybody. When you see suffering anywhere—whether it is among human beings or animals—you go to relieve it. By having this feeling of non-injury or Ahimsa alone, you can see God.

KRIYA YOGA

Q: In our Magazine 'The White Flag', we are teaching Vedanta and Yoga to the readers. I see you also teach Bhakti, Jnana and Karma Yoga. Is Kriya Yoga the same as Karma Yoga?

Ramdas: Ramdas does not know what Kriya Yoga exactly is. Swami Yogananda in America was, it seems, teaching this Yoga to his devotees.

'THE SPIRITUAL SUN RISES IN ASIA'

Q: I know what is Sat, Chit and Ananda. It is a spiritual position like Nirvana, like Tao etc.,

different names for the same thing. I am now translating your book 'Gita Sandesh' into German.

Ramdas : It is good. Bhagavad Gita is the essence of the Upanishads which teach Vedanta.

Q: Maybe, in my previous life I was in India. I like Indian philosophy and Indian religion. We have published a book about Purna Yoga, saying that all the three Yogas must go together. We have to contend sometimes against Christians. They oppose our publishing articles on Indian saints. We tell them 'Christ came from the East. You have no religion of your own. All religions come from the East. The Spiritual Sun rises in Asia.' What do you think about disciples or chelas from the Western world coming to you ?

Ramdas : They come and go. Some of them also stay in our Ashram for sometime.

Q: Is it possible for them to concentrate and meditate on God ?

Ramdas : There are some who are able to. They concentrate and meditate just as Indians do. They have the same eagerness to realise God. There is so much spiritual awakening in the West now that we could feel it wherever we go.

MESSAGE TO GERMANS

Q: May I hear from you a few words for the readers of 'The White Flag' ?

Ramdas : Ramdas' message to your readers is that 'The White Flag' is doing very good work in bringing about unity and harmony among all the religions of the world. It holds that the great teachers of the world

came with the same purpose of liberating mankind from the clutches of lust, greed and wrath which are responsible for discord, disunion and war besides many other evils. Ramdas fully approves of the 'Neugeist'. He appeals to all the Germans through it to get thoroughly awakened to the Truth within them, and thereby not only unite among themselves, but also realise their spiritual kinship with the people of the world by transcending all distinctions of race, creed and nationality.

SPIRITUAL AWAKENING IN GERMANY

Q: We are Pacifists and Hitler forbade the publication of 'The White Flag'. I was kept in the concentration camp. We had to pass through very hard days during the war, but we started the publication again as soon as the conditions became favourable. We are in touch with many spiritual luminaries in different parts of the world. We have some friends in Japan, whom I would like you to meet. Of course, you are meeting Mr. Hamblin in England. I hear Swami Sivananda was ill and is all right now. Though he has been asked to take complete rest, he works tremendously. Here is one of his magazines 'The Divine Life'.

Ramdas: Swami Sivananda is really a tremendous worker.

Q: Yes, he is. I have also to work very hard and I am nervous.

Ramdas: That is due to overwork. You must take complete rest and think nothing about your work for sometime. Your magazine has wide publicity, which

means there are many in Europe who are interested in spiritual life.

Q : You are right. I am sorry Mother Krishnabai does not know my language. You may kindly ask her to excuse me for my not being able to talk to her in her language.

Ramdas : She does not understand the language, but she is very much interested in the mission of Ramdas. She is following Ramdas because she wants to look after his health. She feels that taking care of Ramdas' body is her work.

Q : I am glad you have come to Germany and met a number of friends. There are many who love you. I am trying in my own way to publish something about Indian religion.

Ramdas : Carry on with your work. It is God's work. Even if people laugh at you, do not mind it.

Q : We in Germany are doing great work, but it is not so great as your work. I have, for example, four professions, as I am taking part in various activities. I have enough work. It is great work and it has a great future, not like the atom bomb.

Ramdas : Let us have 'Atma' bombs.

Q : I have asked you to tell me so many things. Now don't you want to ask anything ?

Ramdas : To see you is everything. You are leading such an active life.

Q : I am, of course, working to help people, but this is nothing, compared with your work. I also wish to become a Sannyasin in India at least in my next life and go to Vaikunta with my chelas. It is wonderful to work for the spiritual awakening of mankind. I have been doing it since the last twentyfive years.

At Park Hotel, Reutlingen,
7th September 1954.

A LADY IN DISTRESS

Q: (A lady from Munich) I am coming from Munich. I heard that you were at Frankfurt and therefore I went there to meet you. But before I reached there you had come here. I want your guidance badly. I am in great difficulty. I am married and have two sons.

Ramdas: Yes, it is good.

Q: No, not very good when we have many things to face and people are against us. I am told by my husband that I should not speak to my children about God.

Ramdas: Don't worry. Everything is for good. As your heart becomes pure, automatically everything will be well; even your husband will become favourable to you. You can continue your devotional practices silently. Then you will see a miraculous change in your condition. There was another case in Geneva like yours. A lady had the same complaint; her husband was against her spiritual practices. Ramdas asked her to bring him to see Ramdas one day. Somehow he came. The first day he was not very much impressed. But the next day he came, heard Ramdas and told him he had completely changed. His wife was naturally very happy. So also you need have no anxiety about yourself. Everything will be set all right. What you have to do is only to make your heart pure.

Q: I was told by somebody that we should not repeat the name of Jesus more than a fixed number of times every day. The number may be increased, but it should never be less, What do you advise me about my invocation ?

Ramdas : What type of invocation do you do ?

Q: My invocation is 'Jesus Christ, son of God, have pity on me.'

Ramdas : You can repeat this any number of times.

Q: May I have the blessings, and may I touch the feet of Ramdas ?

Ramdas : Yes, you have the blessings.

Munich, 8th September 1954.

At the meeting arranged by Mr. Eduard Ullmann.

A DISCOURSE

By Ramdas

WAY TO GOD-VISION

Beloved forms of Divinity,

This child of God has come to Europe at the command of his Master in order to propagate the ideals of universal love and service. He is very happy to meet you all on this occasion. He sees wherever he goes, his Beloved, manifest in so many forms.

We hold that the aim of all spiritual endeavour is to see God within ourselves and everywhere around. This supreme vision is gained when we surrender ourselves to the Divine dwelling in our hearts. So long as our ego-sense persists, we cannot attain this beatific vision. The ego-sense can disappear by surrendering ourselves to the will of God and this is possible only when our mind always thinks of and contemplates on Him.

All spiritual practices, Yogas and austerities and other kinds of discipline are gone through with the sole object of keeping our mind in tune with Him. His light should illumine our intellect, His love should surcharge our heart and His power should flow out in our actions. So we must practise, as the Bhagavad Gita would have it, Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Karma Yoga. Bhakti Yoga relates to the heart, Jnana Yoga to the intellect and Karma Yoga to the body. Through the use of our

intellect we must discriminate the real from the unreal, and when we have by its help decided that the object of our life is to attain the Real, which is God, then our heart must be opened and all its love must be given to Him, and all our actions must be done in a spirit of dedication to Him. So our intellect, heart and body shall be completely divinised and thus we shall have risen from the human to the divine plane. This is the way to achieve Purna Yoga or perfect Yoga.

It is not merely divinisation of any one aspect of our life, but of all aspects — mental, emotional and physical. We must live, move and have our being in God, and in that consciousness we must behold the whole universe as the expression of God. In this supreme state, all distinctions disappear and we realise that God is manifest everywhere in all beings, whether of the East, West, North or South. Everywhere we behold this one Divine revealed in thousand and one forms. If we attain this realisation we will love every one as more than a brother. Our relationship with others is not on the physical plane, but on the spiritual plane, because the same Spirit dwells in every one of us, the same Light illumines us all and the same Power activates us all. We love all beings equally. We transcend the sense of likes and dislikes, friend and foe, high and low, good and evil, and all such pairs of opposites, and dwell in the supreme all-pervading consciousness which makes us feel one with all beings and creatures. There is no more distinction based upon caste, creed, colour, race or nationality. The whole of humanity stands united as one. If all of us

rise to this blessed state, there will be no discord, no strife and no war in the world. There will be perfect harmony, peace and happiness on this earth. This is the aim of human life. So long as this aim has not been achieved, there will be dissension and discord resulting in pain, misery and sorrow. Therefore, our first object should be to free ourselves from the thralldom of lust, greed and wrath.

Now we shall examine in detail how we can control the mind and direct it inwards to see God within us. This is the most difficult problem with every one of us—whether we are born in India, Europe or any other part of the world. When we sit for quiet meditation, the mind refuses to be brought under control. The body may sit still but the mind restlessly wanders in all directions. There must be some discipline by which the mind can be made to think only of God. There are various methods prescribed in order to get concentration. Ramdas can tell you from his own experience that the constant repetition of God's name is the easiest way. God's name is all powerful, because God and His name are not different. A person who sings to himself God's name can easily get concentration of mind. The sweet music of the Name charms the mind and keeps it perfectly calm and serene. Whose Name are we repeating? The Name of One who is seated in our own heart. By taking His name we become conscious of His presence within us. This is possible only if we remember Him constantly through the utterance of His name. When we have chanted the Name continuously for a period our mind will be purified of

all its low grovelling desires and God's light will shine in that pure mind. We must go on with this practice until the mind becomes purer and purer and finally merges itself in the Divine within and we realise that we and He are one. Then we know we are not the body but the all-pervading Spirit.

In the state of ignorance, we think we are merely the body, subject to birth, growth, decay and death. So long as this body-consciousness persists, we can never be happy ourselves nor give happiness to others. So our individual sense or body sense must go. When the individual sense goes, the universal sense dawns on us. Then we know that we are not the body but the universal Spirit. The nature of the universal Spirit is that it is eternal, it is all purity, all bliss and all peace. It is in the realisation of this truth that we can truly love others as we love ourselves. For, we and the others are not different, though physically we seem to be separate. In this experience of oneness of all beings in the world, we attain to a state of beatitude, a state of supreme illumination in which there is nothing but peace and joy for us at all times. Our nature will develop into the nature of a child—pure, innocent and blissful. Now we are really the embodiment of the Divine as God has revealed Himself in us in all His aspects, His light has illumined our senses, minds and actions. We belong to the immortals, because we have transcended the animal and human planes and risen to the Divine plane. We have inherited that everlasting wealth which our sages and saints have bequeathed to us.

By attaining this supreme goal we will be able to practise universal love and service. God has sent this servant here only to propagate this ideal. Universal service is based upon the universal vision and the realisation of God, which grants us the knowledge that we are not different from Him. Jesus has said, "Love thy neighbour as thyself." This means we have to love all beings as ourselves. How can we do this except by knowing that we and they are one? The Upanishads declare सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म "Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma", "Verily all this universe is Brahman". Mohammed teaches brotherhood of mankind as the supreme goal. So we see all the great teachers who came to this earth for the uplift of mankind have exhorted us to recognise our mutual kinship and put into practice the great ideal of universal love and service based upon the realisation of the Divine.

Will you kindly permit this child of God to close this short speech now? If you want any questions to be answered or any doubts to be cleared, Ramdas is at your service. He talks in the light of the experience which God has given him. He is sitting before you full of bliss and joy which he got by the grace of God. In spiritual practice the first thing needed is God's grace or saint's grace. Without His grace our mind will never turn towards Him. Saints and sages are the channels for God's grace to flow into us. Verily, saints are the embodiments of God on earth.

BHAKTI YOGA AND KUNDALINI YOGA

Q : What is the relationship between Bhakti Yoga and Kundalini Yoga ?

Ramdas : When the Kundalini reaches the Sahasrara Chakra, the man gets the knowledge of the Divine. This is what Kundalini Yoga claims to achieve. Ramdas will tell you about its intimate relationship with Bhakti Yoga. When you love God beyond everything else in the world and your heart is raised towards Him and your mind always thinks of Him, your Kundalini is roused. As your mind becomes purer and purer and all the lower desires are purged off, the Kundalini rises from centre to centre and finally reaches the Sahasrara Chakra. Now you realise that you and God are one. The same experience or the same state of liberation and freedom can also be attained by the practice of any other Yoga as all Yogas tend to raise the Kundalini from the lowest to the highest centre. All paths lead to union with God, which is Yoga.

Q : Kundalini Yoga is said to be very dangerous, is it true ?

Ramdas : If you want to practise Kundalini Yoga, which Ramdas takes to mean Raja Yoga, you should do so only under the guidance of a teacher who is an adept in it. You should never practise it by merely reading books. Kundalini Yoga is spoken of as different from other Yogas because it deals with a particular system explaining how Kundalini rises from stage to stage and reaches the Sahasrara Chakra. In all the Yogas, Kundalini rises. In the Bhakti Yoga the Bhakta does not watch it because his mind is absorbed in God. He may not take notice of the rise of Kundalini, but nonetheless she goes up and reaches the highest Chakra. The Jnani does not care to know what Kunda-

lini is, but in him also Kundalini functions similarly. His only concern is to realise God and know he is one with God.

As Kundalini rises from centre to centre, certain signs become manifest. When she comes to the heart centre, even a cruel man becomes compassionate. When she goes to the throat centre, he talks only of God. When she reaches the Ajna Chakra — the centre between the eye-brows — he sees visions of light and forms. When she rises to the Sahasrara Chakra he knows he is one with God. These indicate the stages of his progress.

The danger in Kundalini Yoga is that there are practices in it by which you make the Kundalini rise through a forceful method. The sudden change that takes place within you frightens you and when she suddenly falls to the lower centre, you get certain shocks which you cannot bear and your nervous system is shaken up and you fall a prey to mental and physical disorders. At such times there must be some one nearby to guide you.

Therefore the path of devotion or Bhakti is simple, easy and harmless. You turn to God within you like a child back to its mother. You offer yourself to Him and pray to Him to guide you. Once you surrender yourself to God, He takes charge of you and you are ever safe. God holds you as a mother holds her child. You are no longer separate from God and there is no fear of a fall for you. All of us know very well that it is natural to love our mother, father and other relations. It is this same love that has to be directed to God. Ramdas is

a child that has returned to the Divine mother. He is always playing in Her presence. She takes him from place to place to fulfil Her mission and he wanders all over the earth for telling you all to think of God and free yourselves, illumine yourselves and live in a state of perfect peace and bliss.

MERIT OR GRACE

Q : Is it by merit that we get grace of God ?

Ramdas : God's grace comes without our deserving it. We cannot get grace by virtue of our so-called merit. Worst sinners have received grace and become pure and glorious.

Munich, 9th September, 1954.

At the residence of Mr. Eduard Ullmann.

KUNDALINI YOGA AND POSTURE

Q : We are so happy especially because you decided to come here this evening to talk to us.

Ramdas : It is kind of you to have taken the trouble of gathering here to listen to Ramdas. You are so deeply interested in spirituality that you came to meet him yesterday also.

Q : If the spine is crooked, will it affect the practice of Kundalini Yoga ?

Ramdas : The spine may be bent. It has nothing to do with Kundalini Yoga, because it is not the physical body through which the Kundalini rises. It is psychic and has nothing to do with the spinal column. The Sushumna through which she rises is not a part of the physical body. Surgeons have tried to find it out, but have failed. Even if the backbone is bent there is no obstruction for the Kundalini to rise.

Q : One professor has talked to us about Kundalini Yoga. He prescribes quite a different kind of sitting, with the spine bent, and he recommends it for Western people. What is your opinion ?

Ramdas : It is quite possible one can raise the Kundalini, even while sitting bent. As Kundalini rises through a psychic channel it does not matter in which way you sit. It is not convenient for the Western people to sit on the floor in particular Asanas, nor are they accustomed to doing that. There is therefore no

harm in his recommending a convenient posture. But there are so many Westerners who can sit on the floor as Indians do. They say they do not feel any discomfort. In Geneva we were having meditation classes when friends were sitting on the floor in Asanas for half an hour or so. Of course, some felt inconvenience and they could not sit long. There is no harm in adopting any Asana which suits you.

Q: I have tried both ways and I can do both equally well.

Ramdas: One can adopt whichever suits one.

GOD IS GREATER THAN HIS LAW

Q: Buddhism is founded absolutely on the law of Karma. Yesterday you talked about the grace of the Divine. How can there be Divine grace when there is Karma to be worked out?

Ramdas: God makes the law of Karma and if God cannot set aside the law, then the law is greater than God. This cannot be. So He must have the power to suspend it. The king makes the law that a man who commits murder will be punished with death. The king also has the power to pardon him. The law that he makes cannot be greater than he. Generally God does not interfere. He allows the Karma to work out. But He may in special cases go beyond His law and by His grace free the soul from the bondage of Karma.

Q: Will I be able to practise Bhakti Yoga when I have Karma to work out?

Ramdas: When God's grace comes, our mind turns towards Him. Thereafter we perform so many

disciplines by the will and promptings of God. We do not feel or say that we are doing them by our own efforts. In this way we carry on our spiritual discipline in which we find joy. When we fast we will be happy. When we have discomforts we will be happy because we take everything as willed by God. Thereafter Karma does not affect us. The Karma done with the feeling that God makes us do everything will not bind us. The Karma which we do, feeling that we are doing it, will affect us. Our mind cannot turn to God unless God Himself wills it. There are so many who do good deeds only after their minds are turned towards God. Therefore God must come into our life before we can purify ourselves in thought, word and deed, and ultimately attain salvation. Otherwise we will always be engaged in selfish Karma.

NIRVANA AND MOKSHA ARE THE SAME

Q : Is Yoga founded on Buddhism, or is it apart from it ?

Ramdas : Buddhism is an off-shoot of Hinduism. The principles of the two religions are the same. The salvation held out in both is the same. In Buddhism also they say there is Yoga. Yoga means attainment of Nirvana in which you are free from births and deaths and the resultant misery. Just as Jnana Yoga leads you to the knowledge of the Atman and gives you Moksha or liberation, so also in Buddhism, by certain practices, you purify yourself and attain Nirvana or liberation, complete freedom from birth and death. It is not necessary that you should call yourself a Hindu or a Buddhist to get liberated.

JESUS TAUGHT BHAKTI

Q: Can you say that what Jesus said about love is the same thing as Bhakti ?

Ramdas: Exactly the same.

Q: I was eager to hear your reply, because I always thought that if I kept the Ten Commandments, that is enough.

Ramdas: Bhakti Yoga purifies our mind and we automatically observe the Ten Commandments. The main injunction of Jesus Christ was "Love thy neighbour as thyself." This he held as the highest truth. "God is love ; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him." If you want to sweeten your life, filling every part of your being with joy, you should have Bhakti or devotion to God and you must love all beings alike. No other path can grant you this joy. Every part of your body and mind will then be saturated with joy.

WORSHIP GOD EVERYDAY

Q: Which day should be dedicated to God, Saturday or Sunday ?

Ramdas: All days should be dedicated to God.

Q: Is there anything like Saturday or Sunday in Yoga ?

Ramdas: No. Any day is all right. In India there are no days specially set apart for spiritual practices. We worship God every day. We are asked to pray to God three times a day—morning, midday and evening.

WHAT IS KRIYA YOGA?

Q: We had a talk yesterday about the Kriya Yoga and now I find a note about it in Patanjali Yoga Sutra.

Ramdas: Yes, Ramdas can now remember, it is a part of Patanjali Yoga. This Yoga consists of eight Sadhanas — Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi. One should observe these Sadhanas strictly. If there is any lapse, Pranayama will cause great strain on the mind and will prove harmful. Eight kinds of disorders will ensure if the practice is not done as prescribed by Patanjali. But Ramdas wishes to talk only about Bhakti Yoga, because God made him take that path and he is now going from place to place to spread the message that one can get the highest spiritual experience by following the path of Bhakti.

PRIESTS AND WAR

Q: Do you think it is feasible that priests should kill human beings under any circumstances? Is killing permitted in war?

Ramdas: No. They can never be for it. If they are real priests — men devoted to God — they will not be in favour of war.

Q: If war is there what can they do?

Ramdas: They may pray so that it may come to an end. Ramdas has heard that the Pope also is praying for world peace. He recently read a message of the Pope appealing to the nations to live together like a happy family without fighting and destroying them.

selves. This should be the wish of all priests, saints and sages of the world.

Q: Can anything really spiritual be spread through weapons? Can weapons be used to spread religion?

Ramdas: No. 'By love alone we can change the hearts of men and make them think of God, and not at the point of the sword. This is what Jesus tried to do and what many great saints of the world are trying to do today.

Q: Some Western circles believe that we must defend our religion with weapons of war if necessary.

Ramdas: That is not a correct view. You cannot defend Christianity by killing others. That is not according to the teachings of Christ who stood for non-violence. By going against his teachings, his followers will be only betraying him and committing wrong.

BHAKTI

Q: Please tell us something about Bhakti.

Ramdas: Ramdas will tell you how God made him approach Him and in what way he was related to God from the very beginning. First, God created in this servant's heart a keen longing to realise Him. This was thirty-three years ago. Ramdas looked upon God as his master and mother, and upon himself as a servant and child. His one great desire was to see Him, to realise Him and feel His presence, and God taught him to take His name constantly in order to purify his mind, because the pure mind alone can see Him. The relationship between him and God was

established by the power of the Name. And when it was established God's grace, light, peace, purity and joy entered him. The holy Name kept up a continuous contact between God and Ramdas. He went on repeating the Name and he found it sweeter than nectar. He began to drink it day after day until he was merged in the Divine Consciousness. In that state the servant became one with the Master and the child became one with the Mother.

As a man thinketh so he becometh. As you think constantly of God you become God. If you think of the world, your mind will be restless. Therefore, in the first place, you have to establish a relationship with God. Look upon Him as your father or mother and yourself as His son or daughter, and surrender your entire life to Him saying, "I am nothing, O God, You are everything." Then it is that God reveals Himself in your heart in all His splendour. He fills every part of your being and the distinction between you and Him disappears. Christ said "I and my father are one." That will be true in your case also. Christ is the Cosmic Consciousness, and every one of you, the embodiment of that Consciousness. So by the grace of the Father, Master and Mother, you are raised to that state in which you realise your identity with Him. Thereafter, your eyes see only God everywhere, within and without. All sense of diversity will completely disappear. The fountain of your heart will open and love will flow out towards everybody alike. You have now no enemy in the world. Your heart is replete with ineffable peace and joy. It is not a

momentary joy but you have it for all the twentyfour hours of the day. As you have found within you the ocean of joy, you will have no desires for anything in the world.

A man strives to get external things only when he has no peace within. He tries to get some joy by satisfying the senses by contact with external objects for obtaining which he is prepared even to commit bad or sinful actions. When you are in communion with God and are enjoying the bliss of that union, you do not need anything external to give you joy. You are happy yourself and make others also happy. You are then a vehicle of God on earth for spreading the power, peace and glory of God. This state is reached by utter devotion and surrender to God through constant remembrance. God-thought in the mind is like a light in the room. When the light is put out there is darkness. So when thought of God disappears from the mind, darkness or ignorance enters it, making you unhappy. When the light of God shines within, you are really happy and peaceful. Therefore remember God. Whatever action you do must be done with the object of keeping your mind in tune with God. God-thought, God-remembrance and self-surrender alone can save you and nothing else.

MANTRA JAPA

Q: What is Japa Yoga ?

Ramdas : Japa Yoga is a part of Bhakti Yoga. You have to do the repetition of God's name with all devotion. That is what Ramdas has been telling everyone.

Generally, devotees take the name of God with which they are initiated by their Guru. You can have a Christian Mantra, a Hindu Mantra or a Buddhist Mantra. Even in Islam they repeat some Mantra. Some devotees keep a rosary to count the repetition. Among Christians also there is Japa which they call invocation. This is done out of devotion for God.

GIVE US THE LOVE OF YOUR HEART

Q: Members of the New Thought Movement, of which I am the President, meet together every Wednesday. Is it possible for us then to keep our connection with you and feel your presence?

Ramdas: Yes. You can. If you concentrate, you can feel his presence. Before we close this meeting, Ramdas would suggest that we sit for five minutes in meditation. We must keep our mind in the remembrance of God and feel His presence within us, gradually making the mind still.

Q: Do you recommend any particular way of sitting and holding the hands?

Ramdas: You may sit in the same posture as you do now during your meditation. Posture does not really matter. Keep thinking of God always. That is important.

Q: You have been very kind to us. We do not know how we should treat you all, and what we should give you as we have not had the privilege of receiving any such guests before.

Ramdas: Give us the love of your heart, that will do!

(The assembly dispersed after a brief group-meditation)

Munich, 10th September, 1954.

At Hotel Drie Lowen.

REBLITZ TURNS SANNYASIN

Mr. Henrich Reblitz : Swamiji, Pranams. I feel very happy to say 'Pranams'. That unites me with you.

Ramdas : Sit down, please.

Reblitz : I want to make a request. I have already told you about my desire to become a Swami. I wish to become a Swami even before coming to India, here itself. I had written to Swami Omkar, but have not received a reply so far.

Ramdas : To become a Swami you have to get initiation from another Swami who will give you the Mantra, the ochre-cloth and the name. Some other formalities also have to be gone through. Ramdas suggests that you may request Swami Omkar to initiate you.

Reblitz : That will be possible only after going to India. Can Swami Ramdas not initiate me now ?

Ramdas : Ramdas does not give formal sannyas to anyone as he did not himself take it from anybody. Of course, he gives his permission to those who approach him, if he finds them fit for Sannyas. Then he gives them also the new name and ochre-cloth with his blessings. This is all he does. Swami Satchidananda has taken it only in this way from Ramdas.

Reblitz : Can Swami Ramdas not do the same thing for me also ? I shall stop everything I have been doing as Sadhana, if required, and follow what you order me to do.

Ramdas : What are you going to do after taking Sannyas? Writing books?

Reblitz : I can work in the garden, in the fields or anywhere else, just to keep me going.

Ramdas : What will you be actually doing?

Reblitz : As you ask me to do.

Ramdas : Who will look after your mother if you take Sannyas? Does she agree to it?

Reblitz : Yes, she knows I will be a Swami. There are others to look after her.

Ramdas : What Ramdas wants you to do is that from now on, whatever work you do must be entirely for God and God alone. You should not do anything that might involve telling lies and resorting to crooked means. Your dealings must be absolutely honest. What is your profession?

Reblitz : I paint pictures and work in gardens or farms.

Ramdas : Whatever you do and whatever you earn must be for the service of the poor and suffering people around you. Serve your mother and serve others who are in distress. Repeat the Mantra that Ramdas is going to give you—Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram. This may be repeated silently or loudly, but it must be constant.

Reblitz : May I do the Asanas and meditation as I have been doing so far and about which I have told you?

Ramdas : You need not do all the Asanas. How many Asanas do you know?

Reblitz : About thirty.

Ramdas : You may do simple Asanas like Siddhasana, Padmasana, Sarvangasana and so on. Siddhasana and Padmasana are suitable for meditation. Don't do Sirshasana.

Reblitz : If you ask me not to do that, surely I won't.

Ramdas : About meditation, you have been doing it for the last eight years. You may stop it now and do as Ramdas instructs you. Repeat the Ram Mantra constantly, sitting in Siddhasana or Padmasana with Yoga Mudra. Yoga Mudra symbolises the union of Jivatma with Paramatma when the Jiva discards the three Gunas. Close your eyes and repeat Ram Mantra mentally and think of God as seated in your heart. God is within you and without you everywhere. You have first to realise Him within you and then you will see Him everywhere about you. So you have to meditate on Him within you. Now repeat the Mantra as Ramdas does : OM SRI RAM JAI RAM JAI JAI RAM—OM SRI RAM JAI RAM JAI JAI RAM—OM SRI RAM JAI RAM JAI JAI RAM. What more do you want ? Ramdas will give you a name also.

Reblitz : Take me away from this Samsara. I swear today, I will lead a celibate life all through and live entirely for God.

Ramdas : Ramdas is thinking what name he should give you. Have you any name to suggest ?

Reblitz : I like the name Brahmananda.

Ramdas : Yes, let your name be Brahmananda. Ramdas will send you an ochre-cloth from Frankfurt. You should not think of coming to India now. Your

work is here. Serve your mother and the people in Germany who are in distress.

Reblitz: I won't think of coming to India if you ask me not to do so.

Ramdas: Blessings, blessings to you!

FRANCE

Saint-leu-la-Forêt, 11th September, 1954.

At the residence of Mrs. Vera Landowska

NO PEACE WITHOUT GOD

Q: Swamiji, what will you talk to us about? Are you not going to talk about God?

Ramdas: If we leave God out of calculation, we will not live a life of peace. If we want real peace, we must think of God, talk of God, do all our actions in the name of God and live in God. There is no peace in the world because people have forgotten God. Once a friend asked Ramdas why there is so much misery in the world. Ramdas' reply was that the world has lost faith in God and that if only the world remembers God, there would be a better state of affairs. Actually we could bring heaven on earth.

THE SOUL AND GOD ARE ONE

Q: I cannot succeed in understanding what Adwaita is.

Ramdas: Adwaita, non-duality, is the oneness of the individual soul with the Universal Soul—God. You will find in the lives of all mystics, that they had after reaching a certain spiritual state realised their oneness with God and they have testified to the reality of this experience. In a state of supreme ecstasy born of intense longing and remembrance of God, your individuality disappears and you feel identified with

God. This experience is common to all the mystics of the world. So they say that fundamentally the soul and God are one.

DIVINE NAME IS ALL-SUFFICIENT

Q: I was going through a method of discipline including meditation and contemplation of the Self. I gave it up because I could not go on with it. I wonder whether the repetition of God's name can just take the place of that.

Ramdas: Certainly. Ramdas' experience was that he did not do any meditation in the early stages of his spiritual discipline. He was repeating only the holy name of God and as a result of it all the restlessness of the mind ceased and he began to get superconscious experiences by the power of the Name itself. One day when he sat for meditation, he lost himself in that consciousness and felt his union with God. So he found the repetition of the holy name of God was an all-sufficient spiritual discipline. The repetition can take the soul to the highest spiritual realisation. The devotee who is given to the constant repetition of God's name need not observe any other discipline. But it must be borne in mind that the repetition must be continuous and done with whole-hearted love and devotion for God. If these conditions are fulfilled, the devotee may be perfectly sure that he will have the vision of God and realise Him in all His aspects and enjoy ineffable bliss and peace.

MERE READING OF BOOKS WILL NOT DO

Q: I find from experience that reading scriptures or thinking of God certainly raises the level of conscious-

ness, but at the same time raises a number of thoughts in my mind making me lose the benefit which I get on the other side. Is it because my attempt so far was superficial ?

Ramdas : Mere reading of scriptures cannot help you to keep the mind still. Stillness of the mind alone can enable you to realise the presence of God within and without you. The practice of concentration is essential. Reading any number of books cannot grant us that mental peace which spiritual discipline can. We must strive to make the mind dwell upon God by thinking of Him and His attributes, and by offering ourselves entirely to Him in thought, word and deed. If we do this by taking His holy name, we shall be able to obtain the peace that we aspire for and retain it for all time. Of course, there will be setbacks now and again because a short-time practice cannot enable us to have permanent peace. So what we have to do is, we must persistently go on remembering God by taking His holy name. From this it is clear that mere reading of books is not the way. Reading can give us the understanding of the great goal we have to reach, but to achieve it we must have recourse to some mental discipline. Sri Ramakrishna gives a beautiful example, which throws light upon your question. A man takes up a cookery book and reads it. It describes how one has to get certain articles for preparing food — potatoes and other vegetables, sugar, milk, bread, butter, etc., from the market and how the food has to be prepared. The person reads the instructions over and over again day after day. Will he be able to appease his hunger ?

What he has to do is, having learnt the instructions well, to lay aside the book, go to the bazaar, get the things, prepare the food and eat. So also, reading religious books is essential to know what you have to do. But you must practise what you have learnt instead of merely reading the books again and again.

DO NOT STARVE THE SOUL

Q : How far is this possible in the type of life we have to lead in the modern world ?

Ramdas : Where there is a will there is a way. There are so many who are leading a very busy life in the world. Still they find time for meditation and prayers, even though the time they get is very short. A few minutes spent every day in the remembrance of God is quite enough provided we put our heart and soul into it. It is the intensity that counts and not the amount of time taken for spiritual practices. If you have real love for God and if you are a real seeker, somehow or other you will find time for thinking of Him, praying to Him and trying to realise Him.

Q : There are two possible ways in modern life : one is to struggle for wealth in the world and the other to devote oneself to the path of God. Is it possible to have both ?

Ramdas : The aim of realising God is missed when you follow the first path. To realise God is to find everlasting peace and joy. By acquiring any amount of wealth one does not get peace. Just as food is necessary for the body, prayer is necessary for the soul. What we do is, we feed the body well but starve the

soul. That is why there is so much discontent in the heart of man. He has no peace. He is always agitated and distracted. So, side by side with the physical activities it is necessary that we should devote some time to spiritual practices so that we can have inner peace and joy which we long for. This is true and has been proved so from the experience of all those who have amassed wealth. They are starving the soul and therefore are unhappy. The remedy lies in communing with God at least for some time every day and thereby attaining peace and contentment.

THE METHODS OF SRI AUROBINDO AND RAMDAS ARE SIMILAR

Q : For the purpose of getting concentration, is it possible to combine the method of Japa which you teach and the method which Sri Aurobindo advocates ?

Ramdas : What is that method ?

Q : What I exactly mean is whether the object which can be attained by following your method and by Sri Aurobindo's method is the same.

Ramdas : His method and Ramdas' method do not seem to be different because what he teaches is complete surrender to the Divine Power. Ramdas also teaches the same thing. By continuous remembrance of God, your ego-sense disappears and you surrender yourself to the Divine Will and Power by which you know that you as an individual are not doing anything by yourself, but a Divine Power that pervades the entire universe is responsible for all your activities—mental and physical. What Sri Aurobindo calls Shakti

Upasana or worship of the Divine Power is the same as surrender to the Divine Will by continuous repetition of God's name. Repetition of God's name is a means employed for eradicating the ego-sense. When the mind continuously remembers God, ego-sense has no place in you. Your mind merges in a super-conscious state and your actions then are not done by you, but by the Divine Power that is dwelling within you. This takes you to the sublime teaching of the Bhagavad Gita :

सर्वं धर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि माशुचः ॥

“Relinquishing all Dharmas take refuge in Me alone ; I will liberate thee from all sins ; grieve not.”

This means that abandoning everything you must take Him as your supreme goal. God in you is making you do everything and you, as an individual doer, do not exist.

Q: Sri Aurobindo teaches that self-surrender can be effected only gradually and I suppose that goes without saying. But there must be at the same time a decisive turn taking place in us. Should we think of that turn as something happening or should we simply concentrate on God and leave it to Him to do as He thinks best for us in His own time ?

Ramdas : What we have to do is to aspire for God. When this aspiration becomes intense, God helps in our progress and by His grace lifts us up and absorbs us into His all-inclusive, all-transcendent Supreme Being.

DO JAPA WITH LOVE AND JOY

Q: Is it advised that we should not do Japa as a stern and grim duty ?

Ramdas: What you say is true. Japa must be done with intense love and devotion for the object of your worship, that is, God. Then Japa becomes spontaneous and gives you a rare joy as you go on doing it. You should not do it as a discipline imposed upon you by somebody else. If you do not get joy in doing Japa, you had better not do it, because it will not help you then. When you have love for God, Japa must give you great joy. Therefore, mystics say that repetition of God's name gives them ecstasy and they get a sweetness and joy which is indescribable. This shows that it is not mere mechanical repetition that helps us but a spontaneous outflow of our heart towards God in the repetition of His name. The object of repetition is to become conscious of the Divine presence within you and bring out the sweetness of your heart to the surface.

STICK TO ONE ISHTA

Q: Different mystics have given different names to God. Should we from the very start make a choice ?

Ramdas: That depends upon your individual liking for a particular name. Everyone has his own Ishta through whom he wants to attain the super-conscious experience in which he knows that God is all-pervading, nameless and formless Spirit and at the same time, the entire universal manifestation. So for the time being, accept God in a particular form, with a

particular name. You can make the choice as you like, and generally the choice is made at the very start. You cannot change your Ishta from time to time. If you adopt one Ishta or one personal deity of your heart, you must cling to that all the time. So also when you accept your Guru once, you must be loyal to him through thick and thin, and through him you will get your salvation.

Q: It happens also that, for some period, other forms of God come to us and we just cannot stop them.

Ramdas: If you have to accept them, take them to be other forms of your Ishta.

Q: I think it was Swami Brahmananda who said that some time while he was meditating on Krishna, the Mother used to come in the place of Krishna and Krishna would disappear.

Ramdas: Krishna himself must have come in the form of the Mother.

TRANSCEND GOOD AND EVIL

Q: In your sayings we read that good and evil are only mental conceptions. But sometimes evil seems to be more real.

Ramdas: That is so until we transcend good and evil. We can provisionally define good and evil: that which leads us to God is good and that which leads us away from God is evil. But after realising God, the distinction between good and evil disappears.

MATTER IS SPIRIT

Q: Would this statement which you have just made also apply to what we call matter and spirit?

Ramdas: Matter and spirit, although apparently two, are essentially one. There is no distinction between them. Spirit itself is matter and matter itself is spirit. God and manifestation of God are not different. The still, calm and static spirit of God has become the dynamic manifestation that we see before us as the universe. So universe and God are not different. It appears that modern scientists have found out that matter is energy—Shakti. That is one aspect of God. There is the other aspect which is still, calm, static and all pervading. The former aspect of God is Prakriti and the latter Purusha. Purusha and Prakriti are one and the same. The combined being of the Godhead is called Purushottama in the Bhagavad Gita, who is at once static and dynamic, the nameless and formless Reality and also all beings with names and forms. So it is clear there is no difference between matter and spirit. They say these are, as it were, the obverse and the reverse of the same coin.

Q: When matter is formed, is it that the absolute Spirit began to vibrate more and more slowly?

Ramdas: There is eternal movement, and there is eternal rest. Matter is eternal movement and Spirit is eternal rest. Although they appear separate they are one. Therefore, Truth is defined to be at once moving and not moving. This cannot be comprehended by our mind. Therefore God is unthinkable, incomprehensible and yet realisable.

REMOVE THE SCREEN AND KNOW YOU ARE HE

Q: What is the importance of self-surrender on the spiritual path?

Ramdas : Self-surrender means giving up of the ego-sense. Until the ego-sense is completely eliminated, we cannot realise God. Ego-sense is a screen between us and God. If you remove the screen you know you are He.

DESIRE TO BE DESIRELESS

Q : Does spiritual research occasionally reinforce the sense of ego ?

Ramdas : Yes, if you think highly of yourself after making a little progress on the spiritual path. That is the main pitfall on the path of spirituality. Those who have advanced a bit think that they have advanced a lot. Spiritual progress must gradually eliminate the ego-sense and make the aspirant more and more humble. Instead of that, some people after some Sadhana think that they are big and superior to others. This is the danger. They must become humble and see defects in others less and less until they have that equal vision in which they see only God everywhere. In that vision there is no sense of superiority or inferiority. It is so pure and glorious. That is the state in which you transcend good and evil, likes and dislikes. This is called Samata. There are no waves rising and falling in the mind. It is completely at a standstill, through which Divine power and joy reveal themselves.

Q : Is it not that there lurks also the subtle danger of the same kind, in this our desire for peace, — a desire for self-seeking ?

Ramdas : You know that to desire for things of the world is like adding fuel to the fire. And yet, you go on increasing your longings for things of the world. But when the desire for God gets a strong hold on you, and you earnestly seek Him, gradually your desires for worldly enjoyments diminish and you become desireless. To desire for realising God is to become desireless. When you become desireless, you are really free. A man who is bound by thousand and one desires is in a state of terrible bondage, and that is the cause of his living under limitations and getting his individuality strengthened, with the result that he feels he is separate from the rest of existence. Thereby he is subject to likes and dislikes, good and evil, sin and virtue, and many other pairs of opposites which keep him always in a state of turmoil, unrest and discontent. If you want to free yourself from these opposites, it is necessary that the ego-sense must disappear. So, aspiration for God should make you free from all desires.

Q : Is the fact of desiring to become desireless not a subtle form of the ego-sense ?

Ramdas : Ego does not die in the very beginning, you have to overcome it. This means, the ego must be made to desire to be desireless. Give it the name of God to repeat, and the ego will gradually grow thin and finally disappear.

A STORY

Q : Is there no chance of its keeping something for itself ?

Ramdas: Ramdas will tell you a story. A man wanted to propitiate a devil in order to make it do whatever he wanted. So he did the necessary Sadhana towards that end, and by the power of some Mantra and other disciplines he was able to summon the devil before him. The devil said that it would obey his commands, but on one condition: "If at any time you do not give me work, I will devour you up. You must keep me engaged all the twentyfour hours." The man agreed. He immediately gave an order for a palace to be built. To his great wonder, the palace was built in no time. Then he gave an order for a long road to be made ready. That work was also executed very soon. Next minute the devil was standing before him, asking for work. He had no time to think. He gave an order to build a big town. It was ready in ten minutes. He gave another order for a still bigger town. That was got ready in twenty minutes. Now the man was perplexed and afraid. He did not know what order to give. If he did not give any work, he would be swallowed by the devil. He hastened to a holy man and asked for advice and the holy man suggested that he might get a bamboo pole, plant it in the ground and ask the devil to climb it up and down until further orders. He did so and the devil was bound to carry out the order. This meant no rest whatever for the devil. It got disgusted and ran away. Now, in your case, Ram Mantra is the pole and the ego is the devil that teases you. Ask him to go up and down the pole repeatedly and he will soon get disgusted and run away. Ramnam is given to you in order to make the

ego disappear. He must be made to disappear by his own effort. The principle of repeating Ramnam lies in this. As you continue repeating the Name your ego-sense becomes thinner and thinner and ultimately disappears. Then you realise that you are the all-pervading Spirit. If you try to bring out by the power of the Name the source of sweetness and joy hidden within you, then, naturally, all that is undivine in you will disappear and all that is divine in you will manifest itself as love, joy and power.

According to the experience of the Indian sages they say the ego does not exist at all. God alone exists. Ego-sense or ego-consciousness — not ego as such — is responsible for our feeling that we are separate from God, though we really are not. Sheer ignorance has captured us and when this ignorance goes, we shall know what we are in reality. This is not a new attainment. It is only the regaining of the knowledge of what we are. Something is in us which we have forgotten, but once we remember it and discover it, we know it was with us even before. So our union and oneness with God is eternally there. According to Hindu teaching, ignorance is the cause of man's bondage. Ignorance consists in his not knowing what he is. One example is often given of what happens in the ordinary course of our lives. A normally happy person suddenly feels unhappy when a particle of dust falls into his eyes. He has irritation and pain and therefore feels very uncomfortable. He goes to the doctor and gets the particle of dust removed. Now he says he is happy. Is it a new happiness that he gets? No, he

regains only that which he had lost. Before the dust fell into his eyes he was happy, the dust caused temporary unhappiness and when it was removed he regained that happiness. This is how the saints of India teach. It is not that you attain anything new when you realise God. You have been God, you are God, and you will be God.

Q: When our mind has been destroyed, how can we go on acting in the world, doing good deeds and so on ?

Ramdas: It is true that mind is destroyed. We are then imbued with the power of God. Activity will go on with the power of God. We know now it is He who makes us do everything. When we are ignorant, we think we are doing everything and that is the reason why we act wrongly. Just as a canal water which flows without any muddy obstruction will be clear as crystal and it will become dirty when the obstruction is there, so also when we allow a free flow of the divine power through us without the obstruction of the ego, things will go on well, but when the ego-sense is present we do evil things. When the ego-sense is gone, we realise that it is God's power alone that does everything. The whole universe, with all its beings and creatures, is moved by His power and will alone. When we know this, our ego-sense disappears. It is a mistake to think that our actions will cease when we realise God. There are great Yogis whose ego has completely disappeared and who are working for the good of the world. They work for the fulfilment of the

divine purpose, which is to bring harmony and peace in the world.

Q: Does that mean we have mastered our thoughts?

Ramdas: No. We have handed ourselves over to God completely so that He may use us as He likes.

Q: Then in that case our thoughts are also divine, are they?

Ramdas: There are no thoughts there. God thinks for us. God does everything for us.

Q: Is that intuition?

Ramdas: Yes. Intuition means promptings of God. Our thinking machinery is not at work there. If we have and if we use that machinery, we always blunder.

Q: But do we still feel the duality between God and us?

Ramdas: There is duality and there is no duality also. We can take ourselves as instruments of God. Sometimes we feel the instrument is also He. So there is duality in non-duality, and non-duality in duality. As God is everything, He must be dual as well as non-dual.

Q: Can we feel that God is doing everything even if we do not act morally?

Ramdas: We cannot act immorally if we know God is making us do everything. Some people think that God is working through them, when the ego is making them do things. Actually it must become an experience with you that God works through you. Then you will never do anything wrong. What is wrong and

what is right ? To do things knowing that you are one with others is right. When you feel you and others are different and do things, then it is wrong. All the wrong things are done because man thinks he is separate from his fellow-beings. When he feels one with them, he will never do wrong.

ON GANDHIJI'S DEATH

Q : What about the murder of Gandhiji ?

Ramdas : It was the will of God. For a person who has realised, the will of God is supreme. There is none other for him, and therefore no evil. For a man who has not reached that state, there is evil and he will take it as evil, however much he may try to teach his mind otherwise. From the standpoint of the murderer and of the people who were on his side, the murder was a good action. So there is no standard of good and evil in the world. For a person who has surrendered himself to the Divine, all actions are divine and therefore there is nothing like good and evil. He does not sit in judgment upon any action done by anybody in the world.

OUR DUTY IS TO HELP

Q : Is it also the will of God when we see children ill and in very poor condition ?

Ramdas : From the higher standpoint, it is all He who has become everything, who pretends to be ill, pretends to be poor. There is no such thing as good and evil there. But looking at this question from the lower relative plane, we cannot but come to the

conclusion that the suffering of one is the result of one's previous action. We believe in the theory of reincarnation and Karma, and we know that our sufferings are due to our past actions. So long as we have got the ego-sense, we feel the sense of doership, and if we do something wrong, we have to reap the fruit of it, and that fruit necessarily is bitter. If we see a cripple before us, we believe he is suffering because he had something bad in the past. But our duty is to see that we help him as much as it lies in our power and by so doing we sow a good seed by which we can reap good fruit in the future and evolve ourselves to a state of perfect joy and liberation. Of course, everybody suffers for his own past actions and this is a lesson for us also, but we must have wholehearted sympathy for the sufferers. We sometimes come to grief in many ways, apparently undeserved. It has come because we had done something in the past and we deserved it. Nothing comes undeservedly.

GIVE NO THOUGHT TO THE PAST

Q: It is said also that we should not pay too much attention to our previous life.

Ramdas: Only when the question arises we have to. Otherwise we must not think about it at all. We must transcend the past and the future and live in the Eternal. When the question comes up, we have to give an explanation. Ramdas always likes to take people beyond time and space. There is only eternity and there is only one Truth. Let us always live in the eternal present.

Q: If the past comes back upon us, with a renewed force, should we endeavour to see it clearly or should we wipe it away ?

Ramdas: We cannot wipe it away except by thinking of God. Wiping out is not an easy matter. Thoughts of the past rush into us. Acts of commission and omission come into our mind often and if we battle against them, they will only persist all the more, just like a man who does not want to think of the monkey during meditation. When he sits for meditation the mind thinks only of the monkey. So the only way to get rid of all other thoughts is to have the thought of God. So many strive to get rid of thoughts, but they do not succeed. By meditating more and more upon God, these thoughts gradually leave the mind. When the mind is filled with divine light and power, there is no place for mundane thoughts that oppress us. But it should be remembered when our spiritual practices are slackened, these thoughts get the better of us. This happens because these thoughts were not completely destroyed, but were only kept under control. Therefore, instead of suppressing them we must see that they are sublimated. Suppressing will tell upon our brain so much that it sometimes results in madness. Therefore, transformation or sublimation is the way. As a saint has prescribed, wherever your mind goes, think of God there ; whatever your mind thinks of, identify that with God ; whatever you think, take that to be God. Let God alone rule in your mind. Let there be God-consciousness alone in your mind. When God-thought or God-consciousness becomes your permanent

experience there is no more chance of other thoughts overpowering you. Therefore do not suppress the thoughts. Suppression is dangerous.

KOVILUR MADALAYAM
ANDAVAR MANDRAM,
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(VIA) MANAGIRI,
RAMANATHAPURAM DIST.

PARIS,

11th September, 1954.

Conversation with Le Reverend Pere Bruno De Jesus Marie, 51 Rue Scheffer. (Interpreted by Mr. Jean Herbert)

ALL RELIGIONS LEAD TO GOD

Rev. Pere Bruno : I am very sorry I do not speak English.

Ramdas : Ramdas is also sorry he cannot speak French.

R. P. B. : I am also sorry you are meeting with bad weather here. I don't know if you have such bad weather in India.

Ramdas : In India too we have bad weather and sometimes cyclones and floods also.

Jean Herbert : I told the Father that you had been to the Abbot in Switzerland. He asked me if you were able to attend any prayer. I said no, and that it was only a meeting.

Ramdas : Ramdas sees sameness in the approach of all different religions in the world.

R. P. B. : Then you are interested more in what they have in common, rather than in their differences. You see similarity more than difference.

Ramdas : Yes, that is true.

R. P. B. : That is the impression I got after reading the French translation of 'In Quest of God' and 'In the Vision of God' and still more, the path of Bhakti attracts you most.

Ramdas : Yes.

R. P. B. : I know Swami Siddheswarananda very well and I feel that Swami Siddheswarananda is more attracted towards the intellectual path. Recently he has been very much taken up with Zen Buddhism as he has written a book on Zen Buddhism. Is there any special meaning in your putting on the white shawl ?

Ramdas : No, it has no special significance.

R. P. B. : Is the orange colour the usual colour of Sannyasins ?

Ramdas : Yes.

R. P. B. : One thing I saw in Swami Siddheswarananda is that the colour was much deeper. Perhaps it did not signify anything special.

Ramdas : No.

J. H. : I told Father that you prepare the colour from gerrua stone by grinding it.

R. P. B. : Fortunately we are not asked to do that. After reading your books, I feel that the path which you have been following is perfectly in accordance with the Gospel of Christianity. This sort of surrender leading you to the Absolute seems to be in full conformity.

Ramdas : Because there was Christ's influence on Ramdas from the very beginning, besides the Hindu influence. He learnt the Bible from a very early age and he saw in Hinduism a path similar to the Christian path. There are so many among the Hindus who follow the Bhakti path. Therefore Ramdas took the path of self-surrender as the easiest path to God.

PRAYER, A HEART-TO-HEART CONTACT WITH GOD

R. P. B. : Is prayer merely a heart-to-heart contact with God, or is there some technique ?

Ramdas : It is only a heart-to-heart contact and we pray in our own way. There is no technique in it. We sing some prayers of great saints who opened their heart in a particular way, according to the condition in which they were at the time of composing the songs or hymns. We get inspiration from such songs. We pray to God in our own way, we quote some scriptural passages in which there are prayers and also we sing Stotras which are praises of God. As for Ramdas, he did not go along the traditional way but he, like a child, approached the Mother and opened his heart to Her. Whenever he felt separation very keenly he only prayed to Her and cried to Her. Just as it is not necessary for the child to ask its mother for anything in particular or approach her in a particular way, Ramdas also did not conform to any traditional path but approached God like a child.

R. P. B. : The Sadhana which you follow is classical Yoga, Ashtanga Yoga and all that. In some of the Orders, the Christians practise some sort of breath control but we here have nothing of the kind. We only make the room rather dark and sit silently. Our basic rule is that we must be in continuous union with God. But St. Theresa decided that we must have at least two hours a day—one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening—for intense prayer. She commended the practice of throwing incense on the fire. If you throw incense on the fire for two hours, you feel

its smell for the rest of the day. So the specific injunction in this Order is, two hours intense prayer daily and always remaining in continuous communion with God. Apart from that, we have singing of hymns and other things for the day. We have explained to you our way, and may I hear yours? Apparently you go your own way.

Ramdas : But it comes to the same in the result.

SOLITUDE, AN AID TO COMMUNION WITH GOD

R. P. B. : We have a tradition of solitary life, living in the deserts. We are starting it again where we live in absolute solitude and observe absolute silence. Some members of the Order stay there all the life, while others go only for a short period of not less than one month.

Ramdas : Is it something like Retreat ?

R. P. B. : This is in absolute solitude, whereas in Retreat many people gather together. That is something different.

Ramdas : All these things are done, Ramdas believes, with the object of having continuous contact with God, constant fellowship with God, so that His presence may be felt within us all the twentyfour hours and there may not be any moment when we are disunited or not in communion with Him.

R. P. B. : That is right. And there is a teaching in the Bible that we should meditate day and night on the love of the Lord and remain united with the Lord as long as possible. As far as our connection with others

is concerned, we try to enable them to find the same union and serve them so as to help them towards this.

COMBINE WORK WITH WORSHIP

R. P. B. : There is an important difference between this Order and the one you went to see in Switzerland. The Order in Switzerland resorts purely to contemplation and the only thing they do for others is to pray for them, whereas here we go further, sometimes teach and help them in many other ways. I would like to know to which you give importance--to doing or refraining from active work in the world.

Ramdas : Ramdas agrees with you that we must combine worship and work.

R. P. B. : By work you may help others, relieve their distress, etc. Is it not ?

Ramdas : Yes, helping others, teaching them and doing whatever is necessary, as service to God.

R. P. B. : Apparently we view things with the same attitude and exactly in the same light. This seems to be quite confirmed by the Gospel.

Ramdas : Ramdas does not want anybody to lead only a contemplative life. They must serve their fellow-beings in a spirit of perfect selflessness and this, Ramdas believes, is one of the main teachings of Jesus Christ. When he said, 'Love thy neighbour as thyself', he did not mean that we should love merely by the heart alone, but we should also show our love in action.

PRAYER

R. P. B. : Do you think that prayer is more important than action, although that type of action is prayer in itself ?

Ramdas : Prayer is the background for action.

R. P. B. : Would you agree to kindly pray with us together ?

Ramdas : Ramdas has no objection. He will sit silent and will be in tune with you when you pray.

R. P. B. : During the hours of prayer we do not say anything particular, but we try to love God as He wishes to be loved. Now we shall sit silent for a few minutes.

(Silent meditation for five minutes)

R. P. B. : During our prayer, was Christ among us ?

Ramdas : Yes, very intensely.

R. P. B. : During prayers, do you have sometimes experience of vision, revelation, etc. ? If you do not like to answer this, you need not.

Ramdas : When Ramdas is in prayer, he likes to sit keeping his mind still and feel the divine presence, full of light and peace in and out of him.

R. P. B. : Although it is not a distinction really, I would like to know whether you refer to the presence of God as Creator, or the presence of Christ as a person.

Ramdas : He becomes aware of God as the eternal, all-pervading presence, full of light, power and glory. He has also an intimate fellowship with Him as a divine personality.

WHEN GOD HOLDS YOU, YOU DO NOT FALL

R. P. B.: Are you certain that until the end of your life you will no longer be subject to diabolical temptations and that you are entirely free from them ?

Ramdas: Ramdas feels entirely free from them because God has taken him up. If he had held on to God, there would have been likelihood of a fall, but as God holds Ramdas and he is fully conscious of it, there is no chance of a fall or separation from Him. God's grip on him is so firm. He is a child in the arms of his Mother, God. So there is absolutely no fear of a fall at any time. This assurance has been given to Ramdas by Him.

R. P. B.: In certain cases diabolical temptations come and they are rejected. But in your case they do not come at all.

Ramdas: No, they never come.

R. P. B.: Is this specially to Ramdas, or has it got a special point in your spiritual experience, or is it usual with other saints also ?

Ramdas: We have heard of similar temptations in the case of other saints of India, but in Ramdas' case, it seems to be unique, because in the early days when he was praying to God, he wanted to attain a state which he is now having. He knew also that it was possible only by God's grace. He was therefore crying day and night for grace. When the fullness of grace came to him, he was made so pure, free and innocent that he felt it was simply wonderful, unimaginable. He never thought God, in His grace, would take him to such a height in which he could experience

perfect purity, peace and joy. It was simply grand. In the light of his own experience he can make out that many saints in different religions must have reached this perfection. It is perfection which is utterly divine. It is man changed into the Divine. There cannot be any impurity or anything undivine in that being. God has poured Himself into that mould.

R. P. B. : Was it a long time ago that Ramdas had this experience ?

Ramdas : Yes, about twenty years ago. God led him on the path about thirty-three years ago.

R. P. B. : When you speak of thirty-three years ago, was it the beginning of your Sannyas life ?

Ramdas : Yes.

R. P. B. : This is what Christian theologians call the theopathic state, when everything is transformed into God. Some saints call it the spiritual marriage and the first stage of perfection will be reached before that can be approached. That was reached by Saint John of the Cross and Saint Theresa, when there was nothing human in them and everything was divine. It is also said that the Holy Ghost has taken complete possession of that person.

Ramdas : That is what Ramdas said, 'God has poured Himself into that mould.'

R. P. B. : This means, therefore, that according to your experience liberation from anything that is untoward and unpleasant can come only by the intervention of God's grace.

Ramdas : Yes, that is right.

THE SUPREME SACRIFICE OF CHRIST

R. P. B. : According to you, what is the best means of obtaining this grace ?

Ramdas : By surrender to Him.

R. P. B. : In surrendering to God, since one is not yet aware of having received the grace, how can one be sure that one is still on the right line ?

Ramdas : Even the surrender must come through His grace and one must be conscious that one is doing it only because God is making one do it.

R. P. B. : Have you read the works of Christian mystics which emphasize on self-surrender ?

Ramdas : Ramdas has only heard about them, but not read much of their works.

R. P. B. : Did you read the works of St. John of the Cross ?

Ramdas : He has only read the Bible and that made him feel certain that surrender was the way.

R. P. B. : Is there a particular saying of Christ to which you attach great importance about self-surrender ?

Ramdas : Ramdas does not remember at the moment ; but Christ's whole life as depicted stands before Ramdas as a great example of self-surrender.

R. P. B. : When the Christians think of Christ, they think of Him as dying on the Cross as that was the greatest sacrifice done by him for the redemption of mankind.

Ramdas : Christ's last words, 'Thy will be done', stand rather predominantly as an expression of utter surrender to the will of the Father, and that too at the most trying moment. Whenever we have to bear our

own cross in the world, we feel, by surrendering to Him, an inner release from all pressure and we are bathed in a peace which is purely divine.

R. P. B. : I am afraid I am tiring you.

Ramdas : No, Ramdas is not tired. The supreme sacrifice of Christ has of course a great meaning for every one of us, because he has sacrificed his life for the humanity and each one must think that Christ gave up his life for everybody's sake. If taken that way, he will become a great force by which we can purify ourselves and become very dear to God, and finally become one with Him.

R. P. B. : What Ramdas has said is exactly what Christians are taught. Therefore I would like to know whether you have found identically the same thing in Hindu teachings, or whether possibly you were led to interpret them in the Christian way and gave them a shade which they have not got ?

Ramdas : Many saints among the Hindus suffered terrible tortures owing to opposition from certain classes of people who did not agree with them. In this connection, Ramdas remembers what Goldsmith said about the leaves of some aromatic plants that do not give out their fragrance unless they are crushed and squeezed. So also these great souls, when persecuted by the world, reveal their greatness. Some were poisoned, some others were treated horribly like the Christian saints who had to suffer martyrdom. The lives of such saints have provided great inspiration to millions of people. Their life-stories melt the hearts of people just as we are greatly moved when we read

how Jesus Christ, innocent, holy and good, was mercilessly crucified. The very thought of this melts even the hardest heart and kindles in it love and compassion.

WE CAN BECOME LIKE CHRIST

R. P. B. : You seem to draw some parallel between the saints and Christ, whereas we think Christ is God. What do you think about this ?

Ramdas : Our view is that Christ came to the world in order to raise us to his own status and not to keep us down to some lower level. If we are possessed by Christ, we can become sons of God as he is a son of God, and raise ourselves to the same level as he.

R. P. B. : We may become sons of God as Christ, but we cannot be the same God as Christ was.

Ramdas : Christ said, "I and the Father are one". When we are true sons of God we can also say that the Son and Father are one.

SAMADHI EXPERIENCE INDESCRIBABLE

R. P. B. : I would like to know if you can say something about the state of contact with God in Samadhi.

Ramdas : When we are meditating we see first the divine light pervading us and we gradually forget the body. This leads to our absorption into that light and we sit in a state of perfect ecstasy. Ramdas cannot describe that state. It is difficult to make out our exact relationship with Him when we are fully absorbed in the divine light, peace and joy, having forgotten our body-consciousness.

IS MAHARSHI NOT A JNANA YOGI ?

R. P. B. : When we were talking of Jnana Yoga with Swami Siddheswarananda, we felt there was considerable difference, but here we feel there is no difference at all.

Ramdas : Because Ramdas' path is Bhakti path.

R. P. B. : You met Ramana Maharshi ? Was he not a great Jnana Yogi ?

Ramdas : Yes, Ramdas met him. He was a great Jnana Yogi.

R. P. B. : It is said Ramana Maharshi has gone beyond God. Is it not metaphysical ?

Ramdas : It is called Adwaita philosophy, in which no difference between soul and God is recognised. Soul is verily the all-pervading Spirit. It is due to ignorance that individuality is felt. When ignorance is removed, the individuality automatically disappears and the individual realises oneness with the all-pervading Truth. This is what is called Adwaita.

R. P. B. : But is it true that in that state you deny that there is such a thing as God ?

Ramdas : There is nobody to deny or accept.

R. P. B. : I am very much interested in your reply. How long are you staying in Paris ? Do you intend visiting other monasteries ?

Ramdas : Don't know what God's will is. Ramdas has been brought here and he is staying in Paris for seven days. He is very happy to see you.

NAME OF GOD BRINGS PURITY AND PEACE

J. H. : Father was speaking about the repetition of the divine Name. He said it was one of the means he used for teaching novices. The desert Fathers use the name of God, either merely the Name or their Latin formula which is, 'O God, give me help.'. This is used just like meditation.

R. P. B. : We still use it to teach the novices as one of the means to enable them to get the grace of union with God by love, a continuous state of love of God, occasionally calling for some help from Him. But this is done without images or forms. The simplest formula is the best. We sometimes use the name of Jesus or Virgin Mary. Each one has his own way of approach, as some feel that they can get light by repeating the Name like this, others think they get much more by keeping complete silence. We leave each one to find his own way.

Ramdas : That is very good.

R. P. B. : I also feel that the repetition of God's name is an all-sufficient discipline, but not in all cases.

Ramdas : The purpose of repeating God's name is to keep up a stream of God-remembrance so that we can realise within ourselves the love, peace and power of God, because He is dwelling in the hearts of us all. To bring out that light, power, glory and love of God from within, repetition of God's name is a great help. This repetition keeps the mind in continuous remembrance of God. If we say "Jesus, Jesus" always, Jesus-consciousness dawns and the mind is filled with

love, joy and peace, which was there so far hidden. It is now revealed and fills our entire being. About three days ago a Christian lady in Germany came to Ramdas and asked whether she could continue repeating the name of Jesus, and wanted to know the significance of the repetition. Ramdas told her that in repeating the name of Jesus she could bring before her mind the immaculate, pure and perfect God in human body and all the attributes which are associated with him, with the result that she would enjoy perfect inner peace.

R. P. B. : Recently I met a Muslim saint in Cairo. He explained to me that their practice is to repeat the name of God for one hour and immediately after that devote one hour for adoration in solitude and darkness. I asked him how he could say God was actually within him. He replied that he knew it because tears were flowing from his eyes. I was so much struck by what you said that the light of God which is in us will reveal in us through the repetition of the Name. There is a very identical description by St. John of the Cross, which is, "Oh Crystal Fountain, if I see the face of my Beloved in your waters....." The belief is, when we look at the crystal fountain and when our soul has full faith, we see the face fully. We see the face very hazily at first but it becomes more and more clear, when the transformation takes place in us.

Ramdas : Somehow we seem to be agreeing even in details. God gives His experience to all alike.

R. P. B. : I feel definitely there is Christ's grace on you.

Ramdas : Whatever it be, it is God's grace.

R. P. B.: Perhaps the similarity is there because of the influence you had of the Bible.

Ramdas: It is quite possible.

RAMDAS IS AN OPTIMIST

R. P. B.: We would like to hear something about the evolution of the world.

Ramdas: Ramdas is an optimist. He has received the assurance that all is well in the world since the world is in the hands of God. Therefore the world is bound to move towards perfect harmony and peace. We cannot despair of a world created by God, looked after by God, and used by God for His own purpose.

BRAHMACHARYA

R. P. B.: Can such a spiritual height as has been realised by you be reached by men even without Brahmacharya?

Ramdas: No, not without Brahmacharya.

R. P. B.: In the Christian Church, Brahmacharya is not considered absolutely necessary. For priests and monks, of course, strict Brahmacharya is essential, but they also say that married people living in the world can attain perfection.

Ramdas: After leading the usual life of the family for some years the person must observe continence and become a Brahmacharin, a man of perfect purity. It is only then the devotional practices he has gone through in his family life will attain fruition. Otherwise he is not likely to reach that spiritual perfection which a man who observes continence can reach. Sexual

desire is a great obstacle to God-realisation. So long as one is subject to it, one cannot have perfect purity in thought, word and deed, which is essential for realisation.

R. P. B. : Advocating for the other side, may I say that the normal exercise of sexual faculties protects us in some way from excitement and gradually they might quiet down ? Example is quoted of the Fathers in the desert who observed strict chastity and were subject to temptations, anguish, and imagination.

Ramdas : Ramdas feels there may be some defect in their devotional practices. If we are devoted to God in every aspect of our being, no need arises for suppressing the sex desire. The desire does not arise at all. Very often, suppression of the desire results in derangement of the brain. But if the desire is sublimated according to the Hindu religion, the sex energy is assimilated in the body and transformed into light and joy. You will find around the head of saints a halo. This is the halo of Brahmacharya. The sublimation of the vital fluid into "Ojas" — the light of the divine — by assimilation in the system brings the aspirant great powers. Ramdas had talks with an Australian doctor, a psycho-analyst and was told that he believed the sex desire should not be given up and that it should not be considered harmful but should be moderately gratified. But after a long talk he was convinced that sex desire is not a thing to be suppressed or gratified but sublimated and transformed into light and joy within us, and it is that which gives us the sanctity and holiness necessary for God to enter us

and take full possession of us. If you indulge in the desire, impurity will still remain in the mind and there will be no chance for God's light and glory to manifest in you.

R. P. B. : How would you recommend people to act? You say that one cannot reach perfection without Brahmacharya and without reaching perfection, one cannot have Brahmacharya.

Ramdas : Let the man who lives a family life carry on like that for some time and after having had a few children let him give up the sexual life and turn his mind to God to such an extent as to free himself completely from that desire so that he may achieve perfect purity and self-control, so essential for God to reveal Himself in him and make him His vehicle. Ramdas does not mean that all family life is wrong. Moderately enjoying for some time and ultimately giving up the sexual life at a certain stage may have to be prescribed.

For those who are living a life dedicated to God, absolute Brahmacharya in thought, word and deed is important. Sex desire is a great obstacle for those who are on the Godward path. It is necessary, therefore, that they put themselves under certain disciplines by living in solitude, keeping vigil at night, and observing vows and fasts. These are very helpful in controlling the desires and furthering our devotional practices. By these practices and by God's grace, we may not be troubled by such desires and the dark night of the soul may not be there for us.

R. P. B. : There is a particular problem in the Christian world. Marriage is a sacrament. When people are married in sacrament the bond cannot be broken. It will be unfair on the part of God to say that they cannot be broken. It will be therefore unfair on the part of God to say that they cannot attain perfection.

Ramdas : God will also do one thing. Although He puts them in worldly life, He may at a later stage give them the inspiration to avoid sex contact so that their mind may turn towards Him with greater force, without the distraction caused by the loss of the vital fluid when living the family life. The desire for sex is the cause of so much violence in the world and the result is, man does not behave as a human being, he behaves as an animal, and his instincts are like those of animals.

R. P. B. : As regards sublimating the vital fluid, how can it be done ? In Christianity we are told that we must be absolutely chaste, but we are not told this vital fluid must be used for something else. Are you coming really to the Kundalini idea when you say that this vital fluid is necessary for spiritual progress ?

Ramdas : Material helps are necessary. Particular and suitable types of food and solitude are most essential. So also this sublimation is necessary for the spiritual evolution of the soul. The soul is caught up in a net of desires which does not allow it to progress towards God. So we have to keep our mind and senses under check so that the path to God may be made easy. We find this particular sex desire is so strong in man that to control it is very, very difficult.

When man is overpowered by this desire, he is very often led astray and falls away from the path of God. Ramdas in this connection will explain about the system adopted among the Hindus of old.

Boyhood is spent in learning at the feet of a spiritual preceptor and when he becomes an adult he marries. After some time, his children having grown up, he retires at about his fiftieth year. He and his wife, leaving the sons to look after the house and properties, retire to the forest where they spend the time together in austerities and other devotional practices to qualify themselves for complete renunciation. After spending some time as forest-dwellers they become Sannyasins. So the first stage is Brahmacharya, the second is Garhastya, third is Vanaprasta and the fourth Sannyasa. Ramdas is saying this because it is a sanction, according to the Hindu scriptures, for an individual ultimately to renounce his worldly life for the realisation of God.

As regards the use of the vital fluid for the higher purpose, it is not consciously used up for raising the Kundalini or anything of that kind. When the devotional practices are intense, this desire is gradually eliminated and as a result, instead of this vital fluid being wasted away, it is absorbed into the system. The devotee may not be conscious of what is happening. When he remembers God and is attuned to Him, the thought of sex does not arise in him, and if this state continues for some time the vital fluid will be automatically assimilated into the system. The devotee does not have to make any special effort for this purpose. He has only to be in constant remembrance

of God. You will find the saints are always bright, their life is so pure, innocent and simple and they are full of love to all alike. They enjoy real union with God and make the best use of the human life which God has given them. One thing Ramdas would like to know is about the disciples of Jesus. Were they family men ?

R. P. B. : It is believed that all except John were married.

Ramdas : After following Jesus, did they give up family life or not ?

R. P. B. : It is said that they left everything behind, as Jesus said they must give away everything they had. In the Christian tradition, monks and priests have to observe strict celibacy, but for family men also there is a possibility of reaching perfection, though it may be difficult for them.

Ramdas : For the family man or woman, is there no sanction to enter life in a monastery ?

R. P. B. : There are two possibilities. A man or woman having lost the wife or husband, that is, after becoming a widower or a widow, may become a member of a monastery. Or, if both the husband and wife together wish to lead such a life they can, but not one of them.

Ramdas : It is true that at a certain stage family life as lived in the world is not quite favourable for reaching perfection. That is why they try to live a monastic life.

R. P. B. : In the Oriental Catholic Church, priests can marry and lead a family life although monks cannot.

Ramdas : That is true. We must be able to realise God in the family. Otherwise God would not have made family life at all. This belief is there among the Hindus also. There are so many saints who led family life till the very last and still they were considered to be very highly evolved souls who had experienced God and their teachings go to show that they had received spiritual illumination and the vision of God. Ramdas does not say that he is uncompromising, but from his own experience he feels that for the fullness of spiritual experience it requires a total dedication and not only one part of your life. The entire life should be dedicated to God.

R. P. B. : There is a Christian theologian who opines that one can rise to the fourth stage by living a family life and after that he needs entire dedication. He agrees with you and he also says something about Brahmacharya which agrees very much with what Ramana Maharshi says.

LIFE IN ANANDASHRAM

J. H. : Is there anything that you would like to know about their way of life ?

Ramdas : No, nothing particular. The Father has been saying about it and Ramdas is very happy to hear about the Christian discipline in these matters.

J. H. : When I wrote to the Father for the first time about your coming and asked for suggestions regarding where you would stay, he said he thought of a large estate which was given to their Order some time ago and which they wanted to make a spiritual centre

for all people without insisting on religion or anything in particular. Father wishes that you should come to France again and if you agree to stay there, he will be very happy. You will have then 150 acres of forest round about a castle and it is on a hill also.

R. P. B. : What about your Ashram in India ? Are there many people staying there ?

Ramdas : There are 50 to 60 people and many others come and go daily.

R. P. B. : Do you all live together or separately ?

Ramdas : We have some separate houses, some are used for accommodating Sannyasins and some for laymen.

R. P. B. : Are there any temples or Poojas in the Ashram ?

Ramdas : We have a prayer hall in which we assemble in the morning and evening to hold prayers. There is no Pooja or anything of the kind.

R. P. B. : Is there any regular time-table ?

Ramdas : Of course there is a time-table for prayers. Every morning before dawn we have group meditation. We have also congregational prayer at noon and evening. During the day there are so many works undertaken and each inmate is given a certain work to do. We have a hospital, an industrial school, publication of books, and a monthly magazine, a cow-house and paddy cultivation. The workers assemble in the hall for prayers and after that they attend to their work. They are doing their own individual disciplines in their private rooms.

R. P. B. : Are there many such Ashrams in India ?

Ramdas : There are such Ashrams but not on the same lines.

J. H. : Father asks me whether I know of other people in India who have reached the same state which you have. I tell him that most of them are in hiding in the Himalayas and they cannot be easily met.

R. P. B. : Apart from those who have reached a very exceptional point, there may be also some monks who have reached a certain stage and have a living contact with God and who lead more or less a divine life, though they may still need certain purification.

Ramdas : That is true.

MOTHER KRISHNABAI

R. P. B. : Are there Sannyasinis also in the Ashram ?

Ramdas : There is our Mother, who has not come here to the monastery, but who is in our party on the tour. She is a Sannyasini although she is not using the ochre cloth. She is leading a pure life, serving all who come to the Ashram. She sees no distinction of caste, creed or anything like that. She has very great sympathy, especially for poor people. She builds houses for them and helps them in so many ways and takes keen interest in the hospital work and anything connected with service of the poor. Her life is completely dedicated to God. She is one whom Ramdas knows very well, but there are also others in India who have dedicated their lives to God.

MIRACLE AND CONVERSION

R. P. B. : Do you work miracles of any kind ?

Ramdas : Ramdas has been made an instrument by God for working some miracles. He is not personally responsible for them. People who are unwell wish him to go to them and place his hands on them. Then miraculously they are cured. They attribute it to Ramdas. Ramdas tells them that it is not by his power that they are cured, but by God's grace. In all humility Ramdas can say that it is not he who does it but God.

R. P. B. : What about conversion or changing people from their faiths ?

Ramdas : Ramdas does not believe in conversion through change of religion.

R. P. B. : Is it within your power to see the truth within people, to see as they are when you look at them ?

Ramdas : Ramdas sees the Divine in everybody and God does not want him to know what is in a person's mind. He has given him the vision to see His divine radiance and divine existence only.

R. P. B. : When somebody comes to you who is in a bad condition, does it mean that you do not realise his bad state at all ?

Ramdas : Ramdas sees outwardly that the person is very much depressed. After remaining in Ramdas' company for some time his mind becomes calm and peaceful and he goes away cheerfully. This is what Ramdas has noted.

SAINTS LOVE ANIMALS

R. P. B. : Of course, this is a common thing with Christian saints also and we are astonished that it is the same thing with you. It is said that some Christian saints after reaching full transformation had very close familiarity with animals.

Ramdas : That shows they used to love animals, as St. Francis of Assisi did. He used to have love towards animals in the same way as towards human beings. He saw in all of them one Spirit, one Life. He never felt otherwise. All distinctions of high and low were lost. Such a grand feeling dissolves the sense of diversity altogether and unites all beings in the Spirit. By realising the divine presence we can love all without distinction.

R. P. B. : In this case, there was no distinction made between man and animal.

Ramdas : No distinction was made. Brother ass and brother man were the same to him.

R. P. B. : Has this anything to do with reincarnation ?

Ramdas : No. This has nothing to do with reincarnation. This is a vision which God granted him. The love that came out of his heart spread out to all alike.

R. P. B. : Is it why it is considered bad to destroy animals ?

Ramdas : They say they are in the course of evolution. By destroying them we arrest their progress.

R. P. B. : Then animals have some experience Is it divine experience ?

Ramdas: No. It may not be divine experience. In the animal plane they may have some experience, but the consciousness of the divine comes only to man.

NEED FOR FOOD REGIMEN

R. P. B.: For aspirants in the Ashram, are there any rules regarding food ?

Ramdas: We tell them to avoid all foodstuffs that cause irritation in the mind—garlic, onions, chillies, meat and so on. Such fiery food keeps the mind always in a state of agitation and is not favourable for devotional practices. Those who take such food find it extremely difficult to concentrate their mind upon God and offer their heart to Him as their mind is so distracted that it does not allow them to go on with their devotional practices smoothly. In the Hindu scriptures, Sattwic food is prescribed for aspirants. Sattwic food means food free from any irritating quality. Therefore you will find that those who are on the spiritual path observe strict dietary as that will greatly help them to discipline the mind. If they eat all sorts of food, desires for sex enjoyment, etc., will overpower them. So food is an important factor in the life of a spiritual aspirant.

R P. B.: Would they be supplied with wine also ?

Ramdas: If it produces intoxication, it should be avoided. If it is taken as a tonic, it may be considered helpful. In some places like Europe where it is very cold, perhaps wine-taking may not be harmful, but in

the tropics the case is otherwise. Intoxication is not good for devotional practices.

R. P. B. : What about tobacco ?

Ramdas : It must be eschewed.

J. H. : There are so many monks who smoke. The President of the Ramakrishna Mission was smoking, even though he was a great saint.

Ramdas : Exceptions there are, but it is better to avoid it.

OBSCURE NIGHT OF THE SOUL

R. P. B. : Obscure night of the soul. Is it bound to happen ?

Ramdas : Yes. In the life of every spiritual aspirant such periods do come. When the mind gets depressed, he loses his contact with God and he feels that he is a fallen being. At that time he is seized with utter despair.

R. P. B. : It is taught in Christian churches that these things come through the grace of God, and if you go through them with perfect faith, your faith gets stronger.

Ramdas : That is true. But when such things happen, the aspirant feels that God has given him up. If he can take it as God's grace, then we cannot say he feels any separation at all. When he feels separation, he thinks that it is some devil's work and he cries for what he has lost. But one thing : after regaining the previous state, the aspirant says, "O God, you did this deliberately for my good, so that I may hunger for you more and more and my mind may dwell in you more

continuously and more permanently''. He comes to know of this only after he has regained the contact.

R. P. B. : This is what exactly St. Theresa said. St. Theresa has described the successive stages in spiritual evolution. She says in the internal castle there are seven different stages. The first three are not of much importance. The fourth one is that in which the aspirant has already a sense of supernatural contact. This state comes occasionally and the aspirant falls again and this is called the state of quietitude. After that comes the fifth stage, when the aspirant has union with God which is fairly continuous but not total. The sixth one is what she calls spiritual betrothal in which also the union is not total. The seventh is the spiritual marriage—total transformation—with absolute light and peace, with no possibility of a fall. Between the fifth and the sixth stages there are often interventions which seem to come from outside such as visions and occult powers which show that the state of perfection has not been reached. This is the state in which great monks found monastic Orders. Between the sixth and seventh there is a period of persecution, where it is felt that the Spirit has rejected the soul. This is the period when the founders of monastic Orders are sometimes dismissed from the Orders they have founded. But it is the greatest purification, after which the seventh stage can come.

Ramdas : There are some similar experiences among the Hindus. Just like these seven stages, they have also seven stages which they call Sapta Bhumikas, of which Ramdas remembers only the first and last.

The first is right aspiration and the last is perfect union with God. They almost correspond to these.

R. P. B.: St. Theresa starts lower. There may be some people with less aspiration and there is the danger.

Ramdas: There is danger here also. At least the aspiration to attain God is there. It may disappear now and then but it again comes back to the aspirant.

WAY OF LOVE IS THE BEST

R. P. B.: In the life of St. Thomas of Aquinas a woman came to tempt him and he threatened her away with a firebrand. In the life of St. John of the Cross we understand that he was also tempted by a woman but he spoke to her very kindly and lovingly. The result was that she was transformed. Which of the two methods would you prefer?

Ramdas: Surely the way of giving love, treating gently and transforming the woman.

R. P. B.: Please pray that Jesus Christ may shower his grace on me.

Ramdas: Ramdas prays that God should shower His grace on all in the world.

St-leu-la-Foret,

12th September, 1954.

"AM I STILL IN A DREAM"

Q: Swamiji, is it true that you have come here? It is all like a dream to me. I cannot believe that you have come here.

Ramdas: Are you still not sure?

Q: I think I am still in a dream.

Ramdas: When are you going to wake up?

Q: Is it true that you are going on Friday?

Ramdas: Ramdas could so far answer all questions, but yours seems to be very difficult to answer.

Q: Do you believe in democracy?

Ramdas: Democracy is as good or as bad as any other type of Government.

Q: If you had said you liked democracy, I was going to say that we take a ballot here whether you should go or not and you will have to abide by the result of the ballot. But I could not catch you.

Q: When you live in eternity, where is the question of your going on any particular day?

Ramdas: In eternity there is no going or coming.

Q: Then don't go at all.

A SAINT IS A WISH-FULFILLING TREE

Q: You told us yesterday that when there is a divine presence near us we individualise it either as Vishnu or Jesus according to our own attitude or Sadhana. Could you tell us something about that?

Ramdas : This becomes possible in the presence of saints. Saints are compared to Kalpataru or the wish-fulfilling tree. This is a tree under which if anybody sits and wishes for anything, the wish is immediately granted. So saints are compared to this tree. When you go into their presence, you feel a certain strange stillness of the mind and your desire for the vision of God in any particular form will be fulfilled. You can create this presence yourself when you are alone by the process of repetition of God's name or meditation. You can produce the very condition which you get in the presence of a saint and have the vision of your chosen deity. When you are alone in meditation, your mind becomes silent, serene and calm and you feel the presence of the Divine which is filled with light and peace. It is in this state that you get the visions. A high standard of purity and stillness of mind is attained when you transcend the lower qualities of nature—Tamas and Rajas—and get fixed in Sattwa, in the presence of a saint or in meditation in solitude.

Q : You seem to say there are only two possibilities, one by meditation in total solitude and the other in the presence of saints. Does that mean that it is quite impossible when people meditate or pray in group in church, for instance, if there is no saint in an assembly ?

Ramdas : It is quite possible in a congregation which is held with the sole object of meditating on God and when all the members sit silent and serene. Now your mind gets into that silence and transcends multiplicity and you feel there is nobody about you. Your

mind is attuned to the Divine and the sense of diversity does not in any way affect you. In this condition you can have the vision of your adored deity. In such a congregation usually you will find some person who is advanced on the spiritual path and is unconsciously producing a holy atmosphere and sanctifying it, as a result of which it is easy for an aspirant to still the mind and behold the divine form of his chosen ideal. Therefore, for self-purification it is rightly said that we must commune with devotees of God who are constantly thinking of Him and who have attained some measure of peace and tranquillity through union with Him. In such company we find great help and our spiritual progress is accelerated.

GOD APPEARS IN THE FORM DEVOTEE GIVES HIM

Q: It may be perhaps Sri Aurobindo who has said that it is man who gives name and form to God, and God accepts them.

Ramdas: God is described in the Bhagavad Gita as giving Darshan or vision to His devotees in that form in which the devotee worships Him and thus freeing him from ignorance, granting him the highest beatitude. Perhaps, based upon this teaching Sri Aurobindo has said what you just quoted.

PRAY FOR UNIVERSAL VISION

Q: Should we desire to have such visions ?

Ramdas: So far as Ramdas is concerned, he never wished for them but they still came to him. From the very start his aspiration was to behold the Lord every-

where and then attain a state of perfect desirelessness and complete union with Him who is all in all and beyond everything. This all-comprehensive and all-inclusive God-head was the aim of his aspiration. He wanted to reach Him, realise Him in all His sublime aspects, not merely in a particular form appearing before him. The forms that appear during the visions disappear after some time causing the agony of separation to the aspirant, because he gets greatly attached to these forms and therefore cannot bear the separation. The aspirant cannot have these visions whenever he likes as they come only when his mind is raised to Sattwa Guna. Knowing this, Ramdas never aspired for such visions although they came to him by God's grace. Not only did he not pray for them but he also wished and prayed to God when they came to him that such visions might not come to him any more and that he might be granted universal vision by which alone the soul could entirely be free from the bondage of ignorance.

WAYS OF GRACE ARE MYSTERIOUS

Q: Is grace for everybody, or are some more privileged than others to get it ?

Ramdas : Grace is pouring on all of us alike. Some receive it and some do not. As Ramdas mentioned somewhere else, some people open the windows of their heart to receive grace while some others keep them closed and they do not get it. But even to keep the windows of the heart open requires some inner aspiration and longing, and that longing can come to

us only through the grace of God. This is true because we see that all do not want to keep the windows open. They keep them shut. The result is they do not enjoy the benefit of grace. Therefore, it is not that grace is **not on them but they are not prepared to receive it.** Again the preparation to receive it is not due to our effort: grace must come to us to awaken us, to turn our mind towards God and make us struggle for Him, crave and long for Him. Grace must be there with us at the beginning, in the middle and at the end. The ways of grace are indeed mysterious.

Q: Is this the same idea as the Biblical parable of the man with withered hand and Jesus asking him to raise the hand and saying he would heal him?

Ramdas: Here Jesus asked him to raise the hand. So God must tell us to do Japa, then alone we can do it.

Q: Does God say that to everybody?

Ramdas: He does not say to everybody. To some He says and to some He does not.

THE GURU NEVER GIVES UP THE DISCIPLE

Q: When one has found a Guru, even if he has left the earth, how should one view him in relation with God?

Ramdas: What is the meaning of saying one has found a Guru?

Q: If one reads a book and finds that the teaching of the saintly author in it corresponds to one's internal need, one accepts him, as one's Guru. But the author-saint is no longer on earth.

Ramdas: That is simply accepting him as a spiritual guide intellectually. The soul must take part in the acceptance of the Guru. So the moment you accept him thus you feel liberated from within. That is the real acceptance. You feel his light, his power and his peace revealing themselves in your heart because the Guru has now become the deity of your heart. God and Guru are one. Guru is only an outer manifestation of the eternal Truth residing within you. As such, the light has come from without to light the lamp within. Then only you find Guru and God are one and you feel one with him.

Q: It often happens that people who have accepted a Guru, even one of the greatest Gurus, revolt against him and leave him for a period. I have seen that in some of the Ashrams.

Ramdas: But once you have accepted the Guru and the Guru has caught you, there is no permanent separation possible. There may be a revolt on the part of the disciple and for a time he may be separated from him. The Guru never gives him up but continues to hold him and sees to it that he attains perfect liberation. This is also within Ramdas' own experience. There are so many disciples of Gurus who, having left their masters came to our Ashram and said that they did not want to go back to them any more. But Ramdas always told them that they would definitely go back because the Guru's hold on them was so firm, and that although they disagreed with him for the time being, he would surely draw them back to him. But they would not believe Ramdas' words. However, after a

few months, they themselves automatically went back to their Guru saying that they had made a blunder in leaving him and that their place was with their Guru and in his service alone they could find joy.

Q : If liberation is not reached in this life through the help of the Guru, can the Guru help us after the end of this life and bring us liberation later ?

Ramdas : Surely.

Q : I have also seen cases in which great Gurus dismissed disciples from their Ashrams. What happens to them ?

Ramdas : They are not abandoned. Perhaps they did not fit into the system of the Ashram and caused some disturbance there and therefore were dismissed from that place, but not dismissed from the heart of the Guru.

GURU CAN COME IN DIFFERENT FORMS

Q : After the chosen Guru has left this earth, is it natural that the disciple should look for another Guru ?

Ramdas : The Guru never dies. He only shuffles off the body. His immortal spirit ever exists. So you can draw spiritual help and inspiration from him even after he has renounced the body.

Q : Since there is only one Guru, can we not accept him in successive forms ?

Ramdas : That is quite possible. If you take spiritual help from a living saint, you have to look upon that saint as another form of the Guru. This very often happens. Suppose the Guru has dropped off his body and you see later on some other saint who attracts

you towards him, you can go to him, derive spiritual help or aid from him but you must look upon him as another form of your Guru. Guru is the immortal Truth. He may assume any number of forms. You can look upon all saints as the revelation of the same Guru but the one who initiated you and inspired you at first must be looked upon as the one who would liberate you and would free you from the bondage of ignorance and give you supreme beatitude. The other forms may be helpful to you when you come in contact with them for your spiritual advancement. It is like this: A person may create in you a desire to go to Paris from here. Then you start under his guidance and go with him for about two miles. After taking you so far towards Paris, he may disappear and another may come who will take you further on for three miles. Again, he may disappear and a third one may come to take you to the destination. But the first one who created the desire in you to go to Paris and took you two miles must be considered as the Guru for you who came again after two miles in another form and took you three miles, again in another form and took you to the destination. They are all one as guides, though they seem to be different persons. After the physical disappearance of the Guru whom you first accepted and who created the desire in you, you will be taken to the goal by him coming as guides in different forms.

Q: Do you remember, Swami Vivekananda after the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna approached Pavhari Baba and decided to become his disciple? But

Sri Ramakrishna appeared before him in tears and begged of him not to do so.

Ramdas: He approached Pavhari Baba with a view to renounce Sri Ramakrishna and accept him as his Guru. So he did not see they were identical, but took them to be two different saints and he seemed to have already given up Ramakrishna from his heart by wishing to accept another. Ramakrishna did not like this attitude. That also goes to show that once the Guru has taken you up, he will see that he does not let you out of his grip.

"I LIVE IN ETERNITY"

Q: There is a saying of Vivekananda which has attracted many people, "We have the whole eternity before us, therefore we cannot afford to waste one minute."

Ramdas: Is it actually what he said, because it is a contradiction in terms? Ramdas remembers one incident in Swami Vivekananda's life. When he went to America, he had to catch a steamer and before he embarked he was taken to a hotel near the port. There was half an hour or so and the friends wanted him to eat something. He started eating and was so slow that nearly half an hour passed and still he had not finished. The friends feared the steamer might leave and he might be left behind. When at last he finished and started walking, it was in a very leisurely way. One of the friends who was bold enough to tell him remarked that if he walked so slow he would miss the steamer and so he should hurry up. The Swamiji

replied, "I do not live in time but I live in eternity. I will go slow. Let the steamer go, I don't care." Somehow he got the steamer all right.

Q: It is this sort of reply that made many disciples call him the king. He had the kingly attitude.

Ramdas: Was it he or somebody else who said, "Consistency is the rule of fools?"

Q: Do you approve of this?

Ramdas: Surely, Ramdas does not want to be a fool!

GURU DATTATREYA

Q: Please tell us about Guru Dattatreya.

Ramdas: There are so many stories about Guru Dattatreya. He met twentyfour Gurus, they say. That means for his spiritual progress he learnt lessons from so many persons. He learnt a lesson in concentration from an arrow-maker who was absorbed in the task of sharpening and straightening an arrow. So great was his concentration that he did not notice the King's procession passing before his shop. Dattatreya saw that and told the artisan, "You are my Guru". From twenty-three others he learnt twenty-three lessons which helped him in his spiritual progress. Ramdas does not remember the details.

Guru Dattatreya was born of Atri and Anasuya who were members of a great Rishi family of ancient India. They lived in Chitrakut. Ramdas has visited the place. About seven miles from Chitrakut there is a temple dedicated to Anasuya, mother of Dattatreya. It is said that Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva wanted to test

her chastity. They came to her in disguise and begged for food. When she agreed to give them food they said they would take food only on one condition and that was that she should serve them without any cloth on her body. She was in a fix as she was a very chaste woman : to serve these strangers food without any cloth on her body would be a great sacrilege. She could not think of doing it, but at the same time she had to give them food. She finally decided on a plan. She had great powers. As a true wife of her husband who was a great Rishi and being absolutely chaste she could use her powers as she wished. She took her husband's Kamandalu (water vessel) and sprinkled some water from it with her hand on those three strangers. Immediately they became three babies. She took them in and fed them according to the condition. These three gods who were made into babies have become one God with three heads and He is called Dattatreya.

Dattatreya later on became a great Guru. Guruship started from him. Therefore his name has always the prefix Guru. He has mainly three important centres in India where he is supposed to reside—Gangapur, Narasimha Wadi and Girnar. There is a very high hill in Junagadh called Girnar. To go to the top of it one has to climb seven thousand steps made of granite rock and on the top there are two foot-prints of Guru Dattatreya. People in thousands go up this hill to see and worship these foot-prints. On special occasions lakhs of people go there. It is considered to be a very sacred place. In Maharashtra and in some parts of

Saurashtra there are innumerable devotees who worship Guru Dattatreya. From him they get immense spiritual help in their Sadhana in every way. They look upon him as a great spiritual power for the fulfilment of their aspirations. They get his visions. There is a book called Avadhut Gita attributed to him. It preaches pure Adwaita, Monism or non-duality. He says "I am Brahman, I am the all-pervading Spirit." The songs sung by him in this strain have formed the contents of Avadhut Gita. It is a very grand work. There is a story about him which Ramdas may relate here.

A STORY

There was a competition between Guru Dattatreya and Yogi Matsyendranath. The Yogis of the Nath sect are worshippers of Shiva and are supposed to possess great occult powers. They can transport themselves to thousands of miles away through air. Yogi Matsyendranath was getting his daily food from Deva-loka (heaven), where the gods live. Everyday his food came to him from the sky in a vessel called Khappar, made of shell. Once when Guru Dattatreya was going from one place to another, he saw suddenly some obstruction come before the sun and consequently there was a shadow created by that. He looked up and saw something passing in the sky and at once he hit his Trisula (trident) on the ground to bring that object down. Immediately this Khappar came down, Guru Dattatreya saw it contained food and thinking that it might be coming from heaven for some Yogi.

allowed it to go back taking its course. Matsyendranath who was expecting his food got it a few moments late. He wondered why it came late this time. Great Yogis can know the past, the present and the future. This Yogi, through his intuition, found out that somebody had obstructed the vessel on its way. He went to him and found it was Guru Dattatreya. The Yogi in great anger asked him how he dared to stop his vessel. Guru Dattatreya replied that he did not know that it was meant for him and that he did not mean any harm. The Yogi was not satisfied with the reply and said, "Perhaps you think you are too clever. We shall see who is greater". Guru Dattatreya quietly said he was prepared to stand any test which the Yogi proposed. Then Yogi Matsyendra said, "I will disappear and you have to find me out, then you may vanish and I will find you out. He who fails to find out the other is defeated." Guru Dattatreya agreed. The Yogi disappeared. Guru Dattatreya with one stride reached the nearest ocean and there was in it a small fish playing along with other fishes in the waves near the shore and he caught it. It was Yogi Matsyendra who had taken the form of the fish. Then Guru Dattatreya disappeared. The Yogi searched for him everywhere but could not find him. Guru Dattatreya became impersonal and disappeared into that infinite consciousness without name and form. How could he be found out when he had no individuality at all? The Yogi confessed his defeat and Guru Dattatreya appeared before him. There is an inner meaning in this story. It teaches us that we should attain the nameless, formless

and static state instead of merely developing some occult powers.

NIRVANA AND ATMA JNANA

Q : Is there a difference between what the Hindus call Atman and what the Buddhists call the force of continuity, that which moves things although there is no permanence for the objects moved ?

Ramdas : That impermanency or the movement and change belongs to Prakriti, nature that we see around us. But Atman is beyond nature witnessing the movement of nature — unchanging, omnipresent, still and calm. So the difference is, while the one is changing and impermanent, the other is changeless and permanent. What you mean must be Jiva, the individual soul, that takes birth after birth until it realises that it is Atman or until it is liberated into a state of Nirvana or complete extinction of the individual existence. Till then there is this reincarnation of the soul going on with so many changes in the course of its evolution. It can reach the highest plane or Nirvana only by complete dissolution of the ego-sense in which all desires and individuality are extinct. The Atma-sakshatkara of the Vedanta and the Nirvana of the Buddhist are one and the same.

SELF-REALISATION LEADS TO UNIVERSAL SERVICE

Q : I have great admiration for Swami Vivekananda because he had the power to lose himself in meditation and still he chose to devote himself for hard work. How can we get this state of mind ?

Ramdas : Through deep meditation you can lose yourself in that super-conscious state which is called Samadhi. But you cannot remain in it for long hours because, after attaining it, you are commissioned by God to go to the world and awaken people to the consciousness of God and make them walk on the path of God-realisation. Ramdas remembers that in his own case when he went to the Himalayas and climbed up a hill called Nilakant, about twelve miles from Hardwar, he wished to wander in the forest and lose himself there and never come down to the plains. The attraction was irresistible and he was about to enter the forest, leaving his companions behind. But the voice of Ram stopped him, saying : "You must go down into the world to do My service. You must make people think of Me and talk of Me. Don't lose yourself in the forest by doing which you will, of course, get absolute freedom from all work in the world. But that should not be your aim." Ramdas at once abandoned the idea and now he is with you here. So also, when Swami Vivekananda entered Nirvikalpa Samadhi and came out of it, he had again an urge to go back to it. But Sri Ramakrishna told him that he should not lose himself in Samadhi and kept the key of it with him. For he felt Vivekananda's mission was to go out into the world and bring about spiritual awakening among all the people. Thereafter the Swamiji travelled in all parts of the world spreading the message of his Master.

YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

Q : Can you tell us something about the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo as you view it ?

Ramdas : Ramdas does not feel competent to talk about his Yoga. He did not practise it and had only read his books. From the books we cannot understand everything about his Yoga. But so far as Ramdas can make out, he can say that it is a Yoga by which you surrender yourself to the Divine Shakti, and thereby free yourself from the ego-sense, realising the Purusha or Atman and looking upon the universe as the manifestation of the Atman as Shakti in which she is playing in different forms—creating, preserving and destroying. The triune path to reach this supreme state he calls integral Yoga. You get the vision of the infinite, silent and static Spirit, the vision of the Divine Mother as the whole universe, and also of that supreme Godhead who is at once the still, calm, all-pervading Spirit and the universal manifestation, both together and at the same time that which is beyond both. To achieve union with this Godhead is perhaps the purpose of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. Ramdas feels that he also was following the same Yoga. Because, in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga the world is taken as the manifestation of the divine Shakti and not as an illusion. Ramdas was taught by the Divine within him that he should have such an attitude towards the world. Ramdas' path is predominantly a path of Bhakti and Sri Aurobindo's seems to be almost similar as he preaches self-surrender, surrender to the highest Power through which one can enter that silent Spirit behind, the basis of all the manifestation. It is like this. Rama, Sita and Lakshmana were walking in a forest through a narrow

pathway, in single file. After walking some distance Lakshmana had the desire to see Rama but he could not do so because Sita was in between them. He requested them to stop for a while, prostrated before Sita and pleaded with her to stand aside for a few seconds so as to enable him to see Rama. So it is that we have to surrender to the divine Mother and by her grace she will, by standing aside for the time being, show Shiva who is the substratum of the whole universe, who is the Nirguna Swarup. By the worship of Shakti we realise that all our thoughts and movements are born of that Shakti and we as individuals are false. As soon as we know this, the ego sense disappears and we realise the calm, static Spirit or Shiva. Shakti is Shiva's dynamic aspect. So Shiva and Shakti are the twin aspects of the same Truth whom the devotees of Tantra Yoga call Paramasiva. Paramasiva is at once Shiva and Shakti, static and dynamic, and they are not different from each other, even as the sun and his rays are not different. You cannot dissociate Shiva from Shakti. They co-exist. You will find in the temple at Dakshineswar where Sri Ramakrishna worshipped, the image of Shiva lying down flat on the back and Kali the Mother dancing on his chest. That shows Shiva, the impersonal is the support or substratum of Shakti, the personal, who is playing this world game. Universes are created and universes are destroyed, but that calm Spirit never changes. To reach that state we must surrender to the

Divine Mother and get her grace. When you realise Shiva, you are liberated. You know then that you are Shiva yourself and that you have a universal body which is the form of Shakti. This is the acme of spiritual experience to be attained, according to Hindu religion.

St-leu-la-Forêt,
12th September, 1954.

A DISCOURSE

By Ramdas

DEVOTION AND DIVINE NAME

Ramdas will speak to you now something about Bhakti Yoga. Bhakti is of two kinds — preparatory Bhakti and transcendent Bhakti. In the preparatory Bhakti you open a relationship with God and keenly aspire to attain Him. Day by day you increase your devotion for Him, aspire intensely to know Him, to realise Him and to have His vision. In this practice of preparatory Bhakti where a continuous stream of God-thought flows in you, your mind gradually gets purified. Purification of mind is an essential factor for realising God. By purification alone the mind can concentrate on God and ultimately lose itself in the Divine consciousness. At this stage your individuality is merged in the all-pervading Cosmic Reality. So, preparatory Bhakti leads to the knowledge of the Self. Even after you have gained the knowledge of the Self, you rise to a higher state called transcendent Bhakti. Here you see the Self as the entire universe, as the expression of It. The Self is the impersonal aspect of the Divine and the universal manifestation is Its manifest aspect. You see no distinction between the Self and the universe. It is now you declare that you as the Self have manifested as the entire universe before you. In this ineffable vision of the Reality you live

perennially in a state of ecstasy. Bliss of the Atman or Self pervades your physical being and gradually your entire life also is transformed into the Divine, all your actions become utterly divine. All the movements of your body — mental, vocal and physical — give you nothing but pure, unalloyed joy. All the desires that bound you to the flesh disappear completely and you become in fact the very embodiment of the Divine on earth. This is the supreme attainment of human life. The transcendent Bhakti, the devotion that you attain after you have the knowledge of the Self, puts the crown upon your spiritual experience. In fact, you can be said to have reached the very summit of spiritual perfection. Ramdas has been using the word Bhakti and wishes that you should all correctly understand the true significance of that term. Bhakti denotes one-pointed devotion to God. In the state of Bhakti you do not aspire for anything of the world—wealth, name, fame, pleasure of the senses, etc. Your one aim and ambition in life is to have God and God alone. This is called Nishkama Bhakti.

There are various kinds of Bhakti. Some people are devoted to God in order that He may confer various material gifts on them. But this is not real Bhakti. Bhakti denotes that your heart hungers only for the Divine, for union with the Divine, and through such union to get eternal bliss and peace. This is possible when you merge your individuality in the Divine existence and you become one with Him. God has been defined as absolute existence, consciousness and bliss, which means God is immortal, unchanging, bliss ever

existent, birthless and deathless. Into this ocean of divine existence you have to merge yourself just as a drop falling into the ocean becomes the ocean itself. So your little self dissolves in the universal Self and becomes that universal Self itself. In this supreme attainment you are liberated from the thralldom of the senses and attain beatitude which you cannot intellectually grasp or describe in words to others, because this experience transcends reason. The intellect can understand only things that are physical and which are subject to change and ultimate dissolution. But the Truth that we have to realise is eternal and therefore cannot be comprehended by it. When your reasoning faculties and all movements of the body are completely at a standstill you realise It.

The easiest method by which you can attain union with God is through constant repetition or chanting of His name. By the chanting of the name of God with all faith and devotion your mind gets thoroughly purified and the in-dwelling God reveals Himself in your heart in all His glory and splendour, and the peace that is hidden within you becomes manifest in all your actions—rather fills your entire mental and physical being. So, to bring out the latent glory and power of the Divine, the easiest way we have known is to chant the holy Name. The Name directly connects you with God, opens a channel between you and Him through which His power and glory may pour into you and drive away the darkness in you so that you may have eternal light and joy and be entirely free from misery. The moment you open a relationship with God, looking

upon Him as mother, father, or master, that very moment you come to know that you are immortal, because you are related to that God who is immortal and that must necessarily make you also immortal. The immortal parent cannot give birth to a mortal son. This is the first thing that you realise by becoming a devotee, a child or servant of God. Thereafter your constant remembrance of God dissolves your little self into His all-pervading eternal Self. All this transformation is brought about by the power of His name. The Name may be short, but its power is great, because it is imbued with the power and glory of the Divine.

God and His name are not different. But many think that God and His name are different. This is wrong. The moment you take His name you feel His presence within you. If you associate Him with the name, you realise that the Name is the very expression of God and through that expression you reach His nameless and formless aspect. Therefore Name is a bridge between us and God. Name takes us to Him and makes us realise that the Name and He are one and the same. In the early stages you may feel that they are different, but in the ultimate realisation you know they are not. As the sun and its light are not different from each other, so also Name and God are not distinct from each other.

When you go on repeating the Name, you will find that the Name tastes sweeter and sweeter. Nay, it is sweeter than nectar. There are some devotees who are votaries of the Divine name and who, having chanted the Name for years, say, "Oh God, it does not

matter if I do not see you, but I should have your Name always on my tongue." The sweetness of the Name is so fascinating to them and gives so much joy that they do not even crave for the vision of God in any form. Many saints have expressed through their writings that they would ever remain votaries of the Name because they have found inexpressible bliss and joy in taking the Name. The Name is like a boat for them by which they cross the ocean of life. When we are in that ocean we are caught up in whirlpools and are unhappy. It is essential that to cross the ocean we should get in tune with God through the utterance of His name. This is the easiest way. You have only to repeat His name, and your mind is turned towards God. This might seem to be ludicrous, but the power of the Name is simply indescribable. Its sweetness and power is known only to those who have chanted it. You may make an attempt and Ramdas can assure you, you will not regret it. Even if you do not get anything, you are sure not to lose anything. Once you taste the sweetness of the Name, you will never give it up.

JAPA IS MEDITATION

Q: Should the invocation of the holy Name be supported by meditation? We are living a very nervous existence, and concentration is extremely difficult.

Ramdas: Supposing you have a friend living far away from you and you suddenly remember him, what happens is that his figure comes before your mental vision. So also, when you remember God, the qualities

of God will necessarily flash before your mind. When we repeat God's name and we know what God stands for, it is inevitable that these qualities come automatically to our mind. To think of milk is to think also of its qualities. We associate with the Name the qualities of the object. So it follows that when we repeat the name of God we cannot but meditate on Him. Although in the beginning we might find it difficult to chant the Name continuously or catch it permanently, ultimately we would be able to do so. If we catch the Name, we may not be able to hold on to it for ever, but when the Name catches us, it will never leave us. A piece of sugarcandy lying on the ground attracts ants. The ants draw near it, taste it and go. But they cannot entirely give up sugarcandy and go away. The sweetness of the sugarcandy again attracts them back to it. That is how the Name also attracts us by the bliss that it gives.

MANTRA INITIATION FROM A GURU

Q : Have the traditional Names or Mantras which have been used in the various religions for a long time necessarily greater effect than those which are chosen by individuals ? For instance, I know people in France would like to use the French word for God, but it is not a Mantra which has been used as such.

Ramdas : Ramdas can tell you his own experience. When he first started on the path, he found that he was getting a certain measure of peace by the repetition of the name of God which he himself had chosen. Later he received the Mantra from his Guru and started

repeating it. The result was remarkable. The mind not only became still and calm but also continuously bathed in an ocean of peace. Then he found the difference between repetition of a Name chosen by oneself and repetition of a Mantra given by a Guru. From this you can make out that a Mantra given by a Guru is more powerful than the Name which you have chosen for yourself. This does not mean that God's name is less powerful than the Mantra. What is important is, receiving the Mantra from a saint. It may be said that a Name repeated before initiation leads the aspirant to his Guru who will give him proper initiation.

Q: Is there not some danger in repeating the name of God without having received it from a Guru?

Ramdas: No, there is no danger at all. On the other hand, as Ramdas said above, it leads the aspirant to the Guru. By the mere repetition of the name of God without some spiritual backing, the struggle of the aspirant becomes long and arduous and the result seems to be very poor. So the struggle necessarily leads the devotee to a saint from whom he receives the initiation and his spiritual backing, with the result that the progress of the aspirant on the path to God-realisation becomes steady, sure and rapid.

GURU IS THE AWAKENER

Q: Can you tell us what exactly the Guru is?

Ramdas: Guru is a spiritual guide. Just as you require a teacher to teach you arts and sciences relating to the world of nature around you, you need a guide on the spiritual path. As a professor should be qualified

in the subject he teaches, so the spiritual guide must be qualified to guide you. He must be perfect in the science of spirituality, which means that he must have attained the realisation of God. When you have such a guide you can safely entrust yourself to his hands and you are sure to progress on the path without any hindrance, provided your aspiration is intense and you follow his guidance. The meaning of the word Guru is "dispeller of darkness". In the state of ignorance, your heart is filled with darkness as you are oblivious of God. You deny God and do not at all take into account His existence, nor do you seek Him. But the Guru awakens in you faith in God and guides you along the path so that you may ultimately reach Him. So the work of the Guru is to awaken God-consciousness in you and lead you to Him.

Q: Krishnamurthi says it is quite impossible to realise the Truth by depending on any person—Guru.

Ramdas: By saying so he himself becomes a Guru and people depend on him to help them realise the Truth.

DO NOT MERELY WORSHIP THE SIGNPOST

Q: Is it not true that some people have a tendency to rely too much on God and not to make any effort by themselves?

Ramdas: That is true. If we hang too much upon some external person and look to him for everything, ourselves not doing anything, we will not be able to progress on the path. After we receive initiation from the Guru we must feel the presence of the Guru within.

us, as the Guru and the Truth within are not different. The Guru has come as a person in human form outside us to give us the necessary guidance, awaken us and make us turn our mind towards Him within us. Our work afterwards is to purify our mind, turn it inward, and see Him within. The Guru does not teach you to hang upon him for everything. In this connection Ramdas remembers an instance given by Krishnamurthi. There is a signpost at the junction of four roads. The post shows the direction and the distance, say to Paris. A person who has come from a long distance wants to go to Paris, sees the signpost and is happy he has found the way. Suppose he takes a garland of flowers, puts it on the post, sits below it and worships it, that cannot take him to Paris. This is how people generally act. If they simply sit and worship the Guru, by so doing they cannot reach the goal.

THE 'OM' MANTRA

Q : Can you give us the correct pronunciation of OM ?

Ramdas : The sound OM must start right from the navel. That is the right way of repeating it. Some people take the sound only from the throat which is not correct. When repeating the sound, it forms a depression near the navel from where the sound starts. Of course, this happens automatically.

Q : Is that a prayer in itself ?

Ramdas : It is a Mantra in itself. Repetition of it is an invocation.

GURU ALONE CAN GUIDE YOU, NOT BOOKS

Q : Do you think that the knowledge of the doctrines plays a very important and necessary part in the path of spiritual progress ?

Ramdas : Theoretical knowledge is gained by the reading of books written by saints, giving out their experience. But you should not stop there. Theory must be put into practice. But it is always better to have a spiritual guide who will instruct you about what you should do and what you should not. By reading books without personal guidance, we often get confused. There are so many books dealing with religion, and generally there are differences in the teachings of saints. One saint shows one path while another saint emphasizes an entirely different path, and by reading their books you get confused. There may not be actual difference in the teachings of the saints, but apparently you see difference. It is therefore better that you receive guidance from one who knows everything about it practically.

RAMDAS' EXPERIENCE

As for Ramdas he had not much theoretical knowledge when he was put on the path. The Name was given to him by his Guru and he was simply repeating it continuously. Thereafter God within him became his guide. God guided him so unerringly that no mistake was committed anywhere at any time by Ramdas. He was not conscious of it at that time. He placed himself entirely in the hands of God, and in a mysterious way He took him forward step by step,

until He gave him the fullest experience of His grace, glory, light and power. Later he read some books in which the different stages of progress were described and he found that they tallied exactly with the progress he had made by the guidance of God from within. The only thing that Ramdas did was that he had the Name constantly on his lips, and that also by His grace. Ramdas felt that it was not by his power and effort that he had attained God, but by His grace alone.

Now Ramdas says with certitude that he has realised Him. But for it he would not be here to tell you anything about the spiritual progress of a soul towards God. Ramdas speaks to you from his intimate knowledge and experience. He can definitely say that God has taken him unto Himself and he is enjoying the bliss and peace that passeth understanding. Throughout day and night, Ramdas is immersed in peace and bliss. His eyes see God everywhere. This is the experience he has come here to talk about, so that all of you may know God if you have not known Him already. That is the purpose why God has sent this child from India to other parts of the world. He meets many friends, comes in close contact with them, talks with them so that they can love one another and dispel the clouds of discord and war that are hanging over us.

PEACE WITHIN MEANS PEACE WITHOUT

Q: By realising God within us, what concrete results can we see outside of us?

Ramdas: This reminds Ramdas of the saying of a great saint of India, 'Individual peace paves

the way to universal peace.' If each one of us attains peace in our heart, there will necessarily be peace everywhere in the world. It is not achieved so much by co-operative effort as by individual effort. Co-operative effort is, of course, necessary but individually we must be in tune with God within us who is absolute peace, and thereby we will be spreading around us peace, and if each one does so there will be peace radiating everywhere. So many units of us make the world. When each unit is at peace with the Divine, the whole world is at peace. Ramdas will try to make this point clear. When you have peace of mind, you will never do any action to injure or exploit others. But a discontented man always does actions harmful to himself as well as to others. He strives to obtain things from others by using force, thinking that by getting those things he will be happy. We know by experience that happiness is not to be obtained that way. We can have happiness only when we tune our mind with the divine source within us. So long as discontent prevails in our heart we cannot know what real peace is, nor can we give any kind of help to others. We will be moving in society doing only selfish actions by which we will bring misery and pain to all. We will strive for power, glory, wealth and so on, and in the pursuit of these things we will trample upon others around us and consequently create chaos in the world. If we turn our mind within and find peace, we will be loving and compassionate to all people in the world.

DEDICATE ALL ACTIONS TO GOD

Q : Can daily work be integrated with spiritual life ?

Ramdas : Provided the work is done selflessly and in a spirit of dedication to God.

Q : I presume then, the work itself becomes our spiritual discipline.

Ramdas : Yes, then work becomes worship. The Bhagavad Gita describes this as Nishkama Karma. It means desireless action, selfless action.

INTUITION IS VOICE OF GOD

Q : When we are offered in life a choice between two kinds of work, what criterion should guide us in our choice ?

Ramdas : Any work that causes harm to others should be given up and any work that brings good to others may be taken up. This is the only criterion.

Q : Is there no subsidiary criterion ?

Ramdas : This is according to the decision arrived at by the intellect or reason. But there is a higher guide other than mere reason. That is intuition. In the use of reason for deciding the rightness or wrongness of an action, there may be a possibility of our making mistakes. But intellect is a safer guide than the mind which impels us to do actions which invariably cause harm to others. When you are prompted by the mind to do things, you act without considering whether the action is good or bad. After it is done, often you have occasion to repent for it. There the intellect must decide whether you should do a particular action or

not. The intellect tells you that by doing such and such an action you are harming others, Having known this you will desist from doing such bad actions. If the intellect approves of that action as conducive to the good of others, you will, of course, do it. This guidance may not always be correct. But intuition guides you unerringly in all your actions. Intuition is nothing but the voice of God within you. When the illumined intellect and the purified heart are in harmony, the result is intuition. Intuitive action stands the test of pure emotion and illumined thought. Intuition can guide us only when we rise above the human to the divine plane and live always in divine consciousness. Till then we have, of course, to be guided by reason.

THE DETERMINING FACTOR IS INNER SIGN

Q: Is it wrong in such a case to let circumstances to decide? We are often unable to decide which way we should go unless there is an external sign.

Ramdas: The sign must come from within, and not from without. When the sign from without, if any, and the sign from within disagree, then you are more confused. You are guided properly only when both the signs agree, and you accept the outer sign and act. If you are simply guided by an external sign without inwardly agreeing with it, you cannot hold on to it long. So the determining factor is the inner sign in all things that you do. That is often so even with children. They are guided by others only if their inner promptings agree with the external guidance.

Q : If the work which we do can bring others only intellectual or artistic pleasure, is it worth doing ?

Ramdas : If the work does harm to others, then of course you have to give it up. If you cannot give people that inner spiritual peace, you may at least give them some intellectual pleasure rather than giving pain.

BUDDHA'S WAY

Q : If you have unpleasant neighbours attacking you, would you stand in defence physically and verbally ?

Ramdas : If it is physical, the government is there to protect you, and you can have recourse to law for preventing any violence from your neighbour. If it is merely verbal, you have to put up with it, and take it as not coming to you at all. In this connection Ramdas remembers a story about Lord Buddha. When Lord Buddha was going from place to place preaching Dharma to the people, he once happened to pay a visit to a certain village where he had a great critic. This critic went near Buddha and abused him unsparingly as he did not agree with him. This happened at the time when Buddha was teaching. Buddha listened to the abuses hurled at him for a while. He remained quite silent and serene. Just after the shower of abuse was over and when the person could say no more and was tired, Buddha smilingly said : "I am not at all disturbed by what you said to me. Suppose you give me an apple and I don't receive it, where will it go ?" The man replied, "It comes back to me." "So all the abuses that you have been showering on me have not been accepted by me", said Lord Buddha.

FOOD FIRST, THEN GOD

Q : When you get in touch with people who are very poor, should you not first have to give them food and then talk to them about God ?

Ramdas : Certainly, you should first relieve them of their hunger, and then only talk to them about God, if they are interested in it. If you start talking about God when they are hungry, they won't listen to you but go away.

THE SIMPLE PATH

Q : What should we do to follow your path ?

Ramdas : The path which Ramdas has been teaching can be practised by all on the face of the earth whether they belong to East or West. It is a very simple path. When you get even half an hour, you can devote it for thinking of God, for remembering Him and praying to Him. By such practices and by ultimately surrendering yourself to Him, you can get His light and peace within even though you experience it only for half an hour a day out of the twenty-four. Practice for half an hour a day is an easy thing. You can somehow find this much of time daily to retire into a room and open your heart to God, allow His light to pour into you and through remembrance draw inspiration from Him. If half an hour is too long, let it be fifteen minutes. This will be so elevating to you that the whole day you will be calm, peaceful and cheerful. You will be able to move with all with love in your heart. You will be forgiving, kind and compassionate to all. This will bring happiness to you and also to others.

KRIPA FIRST AND LAST

Q : Is there a special Mantra which will lead us to the realisation of God, or is it enough if we use the Name which we have received by initiation even if we do not follow strictly the instructions of our Guru ?

Ramdas : When you have received the Name from the Guru, how is it that you do not follow the instructions given by him ?

Q : Can a European open his heart to God without a Mantra received from a Guru, as such Mantras are always a support for meditation and concentration ?

Ramdas : He can open the heart all right to God and pray to Him to give him peace and perfect tranquillity of mind so that he may always walk on the path of righteousness, and thus be helpful to others at the sacrifice of his own comforts and conveniences. If he thus acts and prays to God he will surely get a spiritual guide who will take him further on to the goal which he aspires to reach. Of course, it is said that first of all one must be awakened by the grace of God within him, and that grace leads him to a saint who will initiate him and pour on him further grace which enables him to realise the Truth. This, in Sanskrit terminology, is called Atma Kripa and Guru Kripa. After one gets the spiritual guide who initiates him, the path becomes smoother for him, as the Master will guide him all along the path until he finds God.

St-leu-la-Forêt, France,
13th September, 1954.

LOVE NEVER FAILS

Q: If we happen to live with somebody who is a terrible pessimist and we do not succeed in doing anything to him, is it all right that we should go away for a while before we attempt again?

Ramdas: Yes, it is better to go away for a while to charge yourself with greater spiritual strength so that you can in your next visit to your pessimist friend change him by your influence. If your spiritual strength is not sufficient, it is quite likely that his pessimistic influence will act on you and you too will become a pessimist.

Q: It is not always easy because one cannot get away sometimes, being tied down to various actions.

Ramdas: It is better to understand him. We must give him love and sympathy instead of trying to persuade him. It is by loving that we can cast the subtle influence of our personality on him and by our remaining always cheerful and happy in his presence, he can be more easily transformed than by continuously hammering our point of view into his mind with the idea of changing him from pessimism to optimism. It is more by spiritual contact that we can change him.

Q: If the whole surrounding does not react at all to our subtle influence, what is to be done?

Ramdas: We must get more and more spiritual power. We must go deep down to the source of spiritual strength within us.

Q: When doing that we often feel very lonely.

Ramdas: It is better for you to feel lonely rather than have company of people who do not see eye to eye with you and who release forces which act adversely on you. You are never alone. God is always with you. You must feel His presence and be happy.

Q: I was thinking of social isolation.

Ramdas: When these very friends you are referring to are in trouble, you can assist them and help them. It does not mean you should intimately associate with them. Those round about you may be needing some help from you whenever they are in trouble and you can take that opportunity to give them your maximum help and sympathy and thus win them over. This is worth trying and by so doing you are sure to win. Kindness and love never fail.

ALL WORK DONE IN A SPIRITUAL SENSE IS DIVINE

Q: Can you tell us something about your Ashram and the life there?

Ramdas: That is a very big question. We have engaged ourselves in various activities—educational, spiritual and also social. All work is done in a spiritual way because we take all activities as divine in their power and intrinsic nature. So we do not reject any action but only take the action as done by the will and power of God. We try to provide for the needs of the people in various ways. We try to supply them the needs of the body, the intellect and the soul. We give them food, clothing, education, medical aid and above all spiritual help. There are so many who are coming

to us, especially illiterate children of the neighbourhood, and we try to give them education. We have a hospital to minister to the medical needs of those who come from the villages around the Ashram. We have a prayer hall where all those who seek spiritual advancement come and join us in our prayers. In this way we do what we can to serve those who come to us, in all manner of ways—catering to the physical, mental and spiritual needs.

HOME ATMOSPHERE IS CONGENIAL FOR CHILDREN

Q: About the children, in the West we are tempted to consider them as being apart from adults and we keep them separate in the nurseries. Are they not allowed to mix freely in the family in the East?

Ramdas: Ramdas would like to know the effect of keeping the children in the West away in boarding homes from early childhood, i.e., in what way this kind of separation affects the future life of these children. Do you see anything wrong in it? Is there anything like estrangement of feeling between the child and parents, or does it work against the corporate family life later?

Q: We find that such children do not develop a sense of responsibility and they do not even feel responsible for themselves. There seems to be a hard and fast line which divides children from other human beings. They are always told that they are children and are not allowed to mix with others.

Ramdas: Even in the East, children are not allowed to mix freely with elders. They live their own

life with other children. There is one advantage in sending them to a boarding home when both the parents have to work for their bread and so cannot look after their children at home. If both of them do not work, they cannot make both ends meet. So it is necessary that they should send the children to boarding homes where they will be taken care of. This is sometimes done in India also. How far this segregation will help the harmonious life in the family later is a question which Ramdas does not know how to answer. But too long a separation between parents and children is not desirable, as later on when the children grow up they will have no sympathy for their own parents and they are left alone with the result that the solidarity of family life is broken altogether. The children feel a barrier between themselves and their parents. When they live together there is unity and harmony, which add to the happiness of the house and makes for the betterment of the children when they grow up. The children will feel the responsibility towards their parents and look after them in their old age with all love and affection. In the boarding homes and other places we have seen that the children are not provided with the proper environment for their normal moral growth, whereas in the house the parents are there to rear them up properly, and by their loving ways allow the children to develop into fine people with a moral and spiritual background gained in the congenial homely atmosphere.

LIKE PARENTS, LIKE CHILDREN

Q: There is a discussion in the West as to whether it is desirable to awaken ideas of self-surrender,

generosity, etc., in children from an early age or whether it will be desirable to give such ideas only in later life. Sometimes the age of four is considered a suitable age when it can be done, and if it is felt desirable, to awaken such spiritual and moral thirst in the child, what is your view about it ?

Ramdas : We can influence children only by living the real life ourselves and not by giving them ideas and theoretical lessons. They become selfish or unselfish according to the nature of their parents. Children learn everything from their parents when they are of impressionable age.

Q : Can we talk to them about spiritual things in words which they can understand ?

Ramdas : It is very difficult to make them understand high philosophy. Simple devotional instructions may be given to them. Tell them there is a God, they should pray to Him and remember Him, get His grace and guidance in their daily life. They will then have faith in God and they will act less and less selfishly. When a child is given some eatables, if at that time another poor boy comes, the mother sometimes advises the child not to show the eatable to him lest he might have to share it with him. The child obeys the mother and hides the thing. That is a very bad example for the child. In such cases the mother must instruct the child to give something to the poor boy also, and by making him do so instill into him kindness and generosity. This teaching to share with others even in a little way is a great thing done for children, and they will surely begin to love the needy and the distressed, thereby

they develop a wider vision of life. This should be taught to them whenever occasions arise and not merely by teaching them theoretically. Children generally follow what their parents do. If we cherish noble ideals our children will also follow suit.

Q : It occasionally happens that parents, with a great sense of authority, just ignore the fact that their children have grown up, but still continue to see them as young children and want to keep them still under their authority and dependence. What can the children do ?

Ramdas : Ramdas has seen such cases in the East also. The mother goes on considering the adults as children and never thinks that they are grown up. She does not give them any sort of independence. That makes the life of the children very bitter. Instead of loving the mother, the children start disliking her and even in matters of right conduct they do not obey her. They will deliberately do the wrong thing, to spite the mother, because she has been in season and out of season nagging them over trifling things without allowing them any freedom. This attitude, of course, is annoying to the children. Ramdas has been telling such mothers to give some freedom to the children so that they can grow up to be self-reliant and brave.

OUR EFFORT IS OF NO AVAIL

Q : The problem is, when the parents do not listen and when they go on treating a son or daughter of 25 or 30 years just as a child of 4 or 5, what can the young man or woman do ?

Ramdas : Ask God to solve the problem for them and He will do it. In all such difficulties, God alone should guide us and He will solve it wonderfully well. Our effort is of no avail. We must bring into play the higher power, not human but divine.

SERVE PARENTS AS GOD

Q : What I can see from my personal experience is that separation of the child from the mother may sometimes help to break that morbid attachment of the mother towards the child. If the child has been separate from the mother from the very beginning, it is healthier.

Ramdas : Ramdas knew one experiment made in this direction and it was a failure. A hard and fast rule cannot be made applicable equally in all cases. Each case will have to be decided on its merits, according to the circumstances and condition of the family, taking into consideration the nature and temperament of the children. The best judges in the matter are none other than the parents themselves, especially when the children are very young. After they grow up, when the mother and father insist that they should still be treated as children, the children have to convince the parents that their attitude is not right. This should be done in gentle ways by persuading the parents into thinking that the children are not children any longer, having sufficiently grown up under their loving care. The children must serve the parents with all love and

affection. In the Upanishads there is an advice given by a sage to his disciple which starts with :

मातृदेवो भव पितृदेवो भव अतिथिदेवो भव आचार्यदेवो भव

“Worship your mother as God, father as God, guest as God and Guru as God.”

He who serves his parents with all love will have divine grace because by such service God is highly pleased. Thus, in the house, there are two gods—father and mother. Out of them the mother is given a more prominent place. She bore the child in her womb and looked after it with all love. Such a mother should never be neglected by the child when it grows up. She should be served with all heart. Therefore we consider the relationship with God as mother as the highest and the sweetest. If we love God as mother, it will be very easy for us to approach Him with the love and freedom of a child. We will then have the affection of the child before the mother. If we look upon God as father, as generally the thought of father brings awe to the child, we cannot be so intimate with Him as when we look upon Him as mother.

SATSANG AND RAMNAM HEAL ALL SORROWS

Q: Can anything special be done for a mother who cannot get over the death of one of her children ? I have seen such cases where mothers never recovered after they lost one of their children.

Ramdas : That is what Ramdas also has observed in some cases. They cannot forget the loss. There is however one way and that is to keep them engaged in

some service, service of a selfless nature rendered for the good of others. In that service the mother will, to a large extent, forget her sorrow although it cannot be wiped out completely. It seems to have taken deep root within her, but gradually she will be able to get over the grief. Devotional practices also help considerably. When she sits for prayer or meditation along with others and joins in singing devotional songs with them she will be able to overcome the grief to a great extent. The mother feels the distress more than the father. The only thing we can tell the mother to console her is that her child is not really dead. It has gone only from one world to another. She can feel the presence of the child by the very remembrance of it with love and be cheerful again. She may be told that in course of time she also will have to leave this world. This is how Ramdas has been giving solace to such mothers. Only the body has been given up by the child and it exists as soul in some other world. Love is a great healing force. It can even unify us with those loved ones who have departed from this life.

Many disciples who were initiated by their Guru feel utterly unhappy at the physical disappearance of their Guru. They think they have lost their Guru for ever. As the immortal spirit, he is always there. They can talk to him and derive inspiration from him. Guru never dies. So also with the departed ones. Therefore there is no reason to make our life miserable by simply pining for them. One day when Ramdas was in Mangalore, through a friend he came to know that there was a family about five miles away which had sustained

a great loss in the death of a grown-up son. The boy along with another young man had gone for a bath in the sea and both were carried away by the waves, and could not be rescued. They were eighteen and twenty years old. This was a terrible blow to the mother. Ramdas was requested to go there to give solace to the mother. She was immersed in grief. When Ramdas went to see her she was lying down sobbing. He was told that she was crying day and night. She came to know Ramdas had gone there. She had seen Ramdas many years ago. Ramdas called her but she would not turn her face towards him. She had her face towards the wall, lying on the floor, and she was said to have been in that same condition for the previous three days. Ramdas sat near her and addressed her, "Mother, will you please turn your face towards Ramdas? Why are you so angry with him? Ramdas is a child who has come to see you." She did not reply and was sobbing all the time. Ramdas waited for some time and again requested her to turn her face.

Ramdas sat silently for ten minutes by her side and it had the desired effect. She turned and looked at Ramdas. Ramdas was full of smiles. People were wondering how he could smile in the face of that sorrow. Somehow Ramdas' smile removed all the grief of the lady. She suddenly got up and sat facing Ramdas. Ramdas looked at her and said, "Why should you be unhappy? Don't you know everything passes away? Are we all permanent here? Today we are here and tomorrow we are gone. Knowing

this, why do you feel sorry for happenings over which you have no control? The body has passed away, but the soul is immortal. Do you think we will all be here after some years? No, we will have to depart from this life. Then why should you make yourself so miserable over what has happened? The body is after all perishable." As Ramdas' words sank into her mind, gradually her face lit up with a smile. He was happy to see the smile, and took that opportunity to request her to take some food. Ramdas said he would share it with her. He asked the people at home to bring some eatables and milk. She took something and all the members of the family were supremely happy.

Before leaving Ramdas told her that after he had left she should not get back into the sorrowful mood. To prevent that, Ramdas would give her a pill and asked her to take it. That was the Ramnam pill which would cure all mental maladies. She agreed to take it and Ramdas made her repeat Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram three times and took permission to leave. He requested her to keep the pill always in her mouth and let it dissolve slowly and assured her that it would give her infinite peace.

Ramdas learnt later that she kept the Mantra on her tongue continuously day and night. The result was, the sorrow gradually left her and she began to move about in the house and attend to her normal duties. After some years Ramdas met her again, when she said: "You came to me as a great solace. The sense of separation from my son has considerably

faded away and I get peace by the repetition of Ramnam." Ramdas replied that it was quite natural for a mother not to forget her departed child. But she said that she now remembered him with love. Ramdas had told her that the child had not passed away, he had only dropped his body and was now living in spirit. These words had a salutary effect and she found great solace by taking the Name and in the thought that she would some day go and meet her child.

COMMUNICATION WITH THE DEAD IS AN OBSTACLE

Q: When a mother is told that her children are in the other world, will she not be tempted to communicate with them?

Ramdas: That is what so many have done, even against the advice given by experienced people. They got in touch with some medium and communicated with their departed children. Ramdas is not at all in favour of such practices. They can think of them with love and thereby feel that the departed children are still existing and have not gone into nothingness. Ramdas would not like them to communicate with the dead. That is not desirable and will prove to be a great obstruction in the way of their spiritual progress, if they are trying to liberate themselves. Still, people are so much attracted by such methods that they go to mediums and communicate with the dead through them. This is not good for them. It will be simply diverting their mind from the right path for the time being, cutting short their progress onwards.

Q : Can you say something more specific about the danger of such attempts to communicate with the dead ? If we speak to people in general terms they do not pay much attention.

Ramdas : It becomes a mania with some people when they once start communicating with the dead. They do not realise that they may be tempted to spend their whole life in such experiments. That way our minds get caught up in the spirit world and do not go beyond it. Our goal is to reach God who is beyond all planes and all worlds. When we are held up in the world of spirits, our progress is naturally cut short. When we think of the spirit world and keep our thoughts always in it, after this life is over we will go to that world. Surely, it is not a happy thing for us to go there and come back. So, decidedly it is an obstacle on the path. It does not allow us to rise higher. We should never loiter in the spirit world, but must proceed straight to the Highest—God. Ramdas' advice to such people is that they should purify their mind and heart and keep God as their goal of attainment.

PROBE NOT INTO THE PAST OR THE FUTURE

Q : What do you think of the temptation to try to know about the future by various methods ?

Ramdas : Ramdas is not in favour also of such things. To probe into the future through the help of astrology, palmistry, communication with spirits and Yoga specially practised in order to know about the future, is not advisable. These things lead us astray from the right path. You must leave the future comple-

tely in the hands of God if you want to have Him. You should never worry about the future. These things will drag you down. When you surrender to God, you must lay yourself entirely at His feet and abide by His will, so that you can live from moment to moment like a child in the hands of the mother, without a single thought of the future, without any worry of any kind and with the mind always peaceful and happy.

PSYCHOLOGY

Q : Would this also apply to research into our own individual past ? There is a very important school of psychology which attempts to cure many of our mental and even physical illnesses by trying to discover forgotten causes in our remote past and to find out in what way we did things and what we felt when we were children. These psychologists determine from these data the right remedy for the present ailment. This practice is very popular now in Europe and it brings about a number of healings, but it also brings into the minds of great many people most horrible things which took place in the forgotten past and which are often an encumbrance when they are remembered.

Ramdas : Let us not raise the ghost of the past. Do not make any researches into the field of the mind but try to go beyond the mind. By conducting investigations into the mind you get some momentary relief but that is not what you are after. You are after some permanent relief from all the ills of life, both mental and physical. That is the object of human life. In the attempt to know what happened to us in the past, we

will be merely loitering in the lower planes. You are asked to go beyond every plane into that super-conscious state in which there is no count of time and space and by reaching which alone you will get absolute release from all sorrow and bondage. Immediately you may get some relief here, mentally or physically, by these researches which the psychologists do for you, but you can be sure that such relief is not going to be permanent.

NO TAIN OF SEX IN DIVINE LOVE

As you have already said, such practices bring up so many horrible things of the past which distract our mind. It is therefore better that you do not think of the past. When you do not think of the past you may not have any thought of the future also. Then you live in the Eternal. Past, present and future are all in the mental plane. But if we loiter there only, then our progress higher up will be cut short and we will be involved only in the mental phenomenon. We will have no escape from it. Ramdas has heard and read about psycho-analysis. They have some remarkable suggestions and have arrived at some conclusions. Ramdas has read what they say about libido. But Ramdas does not agree with them. There is a higher way of thinking. These psycho-analysts are against Brahmacharya. Brahmacharya according to them raises many psychological problems and is detrimental to the health of the person. No Indian agrees with this view. Strict Brahmacharya gives right balance to one's life

and brings about spiritual illumination in him and grants him real happiness in this life, as he will be in tune with the Infinite. Here, a person practising Brahmacharya may appear to be abnormal. But this abnormality is better than the so-called normality which is the cause of much disharmony in one's life. Brahmacharya enables one to live a life of selfless love and service for one's brethren.

Ramdas has to say something more. It is contended by psychologists that even the love of the child for the mother is based on libido and that all emotions have their origin in sex. They apply the same theory to divine love also. This is rather going too far. Ramdas can say definitely that divine love is absolutely free from any sex desire. Divine love is so pure, so glorious, and the idea of sex has no place in it. Those who have not experienced this love may say that every kind of love has the sex desire at its inception. But it must be understood that only through complete extinction of sex desire, divine love illumines our heart. Divine love is universal in its nature and it is far above the physical sense. So long as you have physical consciousness you may love somebody with some sensual or other motive. But when you rise above the physical plane and dwell in the spiritual, you love everybody without expecting any return. This is love for love's sake, and your heart overflows with love spontaneously. In that love, there is not the slightest vestige of desire, let alone the sex desire. It is simply glorious, pure and holy.

BRAHMAN IS SEXLESS

Q: The above attempt to see the sign of sex desire in everything is very common in Europe. Is this the sign of the times? Why does that take place?

Ramdas: That may be a stage through which the human mind has to pass before transcending it, because man is only a thinking animal. He must think and think until he sets before him certain values as final and then go beyond them. His ideals change as he goes on evolving until he reaches the Infinite. Thereafter there is no evolution at all. The purpose of these researches into the mind may be to transcend the mind ultimately. In the Hindu philosophy God has been described as sexless Brahman. When we reach God we will have no idea of sex at all. It is said that in Samadhi distinction between man and woman disappears. Both are looked upon as images of Brahman. They see in both the Divine, because the Divine is nameless, formless and changeless.

SAINT MIRA BAI

There was a great woman-saint in India called Mira Bai. She once went to see a saint. She sent word to the saint from the gate that she wanted his Darshan. The saint was sitting in his room and informed her that he was not willing to see a woman. Mira Bai was surprised at this and sent word to him again to say that in her opinion all were women and that there was only one Purusha — the all-pervading, static, calm, impersonal Spirit. All the forms are assumed by Prakriti and they are women. As she had

heard only about one male, Purusha, and she now came to know from this saint that he was another, she was eager to see the second Purusha. The saint heard this, at once came running to her, and fell at her feet and admitted that he was at fault. Purusha is the sexless Reality. When you attain this Purusha, where is the question of sex for you ?

THE ETERNAL IS BEYOND ALL MENTAL STATES

Q: Can you say something about the relation between the dream and waking states, and do you think it is right for the western science to speak of all that relates to the dream state ?

Ramdas: Dream, waking and sleep are three mental states. The mind in a particular condition is known to be in waking state, in another condition in dream state, and in yet another condition in sleeping state. The waking state is as unimportant as the dream state, because they are after all mental states. When one state is there, another state is not there, and so all these are changing states. They are equally false because the waking and dream states completely disappear in the sleep state. In other words when the mind is asleep you have neither the waking nor the dream state. As these are changing, it is clear that they are not permanent, and that state which is beyond these three and which is changeless is the real state, and that is Eternal. Indian philosophers have set as much value on the waking as on the dream state. In the dream state, the experiences that we undergo appear to us to be as real as those in the waking state,

and so they take the dream state and waking state as belonging to the same category, both to be rejected as not reliable and true.

ATMAN THE ABSOLUTE IS BRAHMAN

Q: I was never able to see difference between Atman and Brahman. I wonder whether the Atman is a particularised aspect of Brahman. Are they one and the same? If they are one, why two words for it?

Ramdas: The word Atman in the Hindu scriptures is used for both the Jiva and Brahman. Jiva is the individual soul and Brahman is the universal Spirit. In the Bhagavad Gita you find the word Atman used also in the sense of the individual soul. If we take Atman as universal Spirit, then Atman is not different from Brahman. Brahman is another name for Atman and Atman is another name for Brahman. But if Atman is taken as individual soul or Jiva, Atman is different from Brahman. It is said Brahman plus Maya is Jiva, and Jiva minus Maya is Brahman. Brahman and Atman, taken as the universal Spirit, are one and the same. So the word Atman has two meanings, one as the individual soul and the other as the universal Spirit.

Q: In the Hindu scriptures which make mention of successive life, it is said that Atman migrates. But on the other hand there is no such thing as Jiva. This is what every scripture says.

Ramdas: That is from the absolute standpoint where there is no Jiva. But from the relative standpoint, Jiva exists.

Q : So from the absolute standpoint, do you mean to say there is no successive life at all ?

Ramdas : No, nothing of the kind.

WE WORSHIP GODS FOR MATERIAL BENEFITS

Q : Can you tell us about the gods of India ?

Ramdas : Each god or goddess has got some significance about him or her. There are gods representing innumerable forces of nature. There are so many gods—fire is god, air is god, ether is god, water is god and wind is god. In this way elements are symbolised as different gods. There are other gods also, like Indra who is the god of rain and many devotees propitiate him. They offer oblations into the fire in order to please the gods because fire is called the mouth of gods. They offer certain things as oblations into the fire and get some material benefits. In the Vedas mention is made about the elementary gods who are called Devatas. Offering is made to them so that they may be pleased and confer health, wealth and prosperity. In this process of worshipping gods, ultimately we come to behold everything as the manifestation of God. The Vedas lead us to Vedanta. Vedanta is the end of all Vedas, in which we are taught that everything is God. There is one sentence in the Upanishads सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म "verily, this entire universe is Brahman". There is nothing but Brahman. This is the vision which Vedanta holds out to us. This principle of worshipping the elements as gods and then gradually expanding our vision so that we can see God in each and everyone, is unique. Even trees are worshipped.

as god, stones are worshipped as god, and animals too are worshipped as god. This is all done with a view to expanding our vision, in order that we may behold divinity in each and every object. Ramdas has generalised the whole thing instead of talking about any particular god and telling about the material benefits one gets by the worship of that particular deity. But we must bear in mind that we have to gradually rise beyond the ritual practices enjoined upon us by the Vedas and finally behold the Divine everywhere and in everything.

These are the words in the Bhagavad Gita uttered by Lord Krishna, “वासुदेवः सर्वमिति” meaning ‘Whatever exists is Vasudeva’. Vasudeva is another name of Krishna. This is the spiritual perfection to which the Vedas and the Upanishads lead us.

SANKHYA, VEDANTA AND TANTRA

Q : Should we take the six Darshanas as representing five different views, another one as the synthesis of the whole, the last one being the Vedanta ? I am struck by the fact that Sankhya is being quoted very often which, being a Darshana, is one of the forms of error.

Ramdas : In the Bhagavad Gita we find a synthesis of all the Yogas—Sankhya, Vedanta and Tantra—of Jnana, Bhakti and Karma. Gita holds before us an integral Yoga in which all the Yogas are combined. Kapila first expounded the Sankhya, in which it is said there are innumerable Purushas and one Prakriti. But Krishna changed it into his own Sankhya in which there

is only one Purusha and one Prakriti. Universal manifestation is Prakriti and the all-pervading Spirit is the Purusha. You will find so many Jivas who have ultimately to realise the Purusha aspect, and having realised it, witness the Prakriti standing apart from it. This is what is said in the Bhagavad Gita about Sankhya. Vedanta relates to the seeing of the Divine everywhere in the universe and worshipping that universal Lord with all your love. This love aspect of the Divine relates to the heart and so this is called Bhakti Yoga. Karma Yoga is to do all actions of the mind, senses and body in a spirit of dedication to the Divine Shakti. All these actions, you realise, are not done by you but by the universal power, Shakti, according to the Tantra. The power that makes the plant grow, the wind blow, the sun shine, is the same power that makes every other thing active and is also responsible for your own activity—physical and mental. When you know this, your ego-sense is dissolved and you realise your oneness with Siva—the static, calm, silent Brahman. Even after realising your identity with Siva, you are active in the world. You are active not in the sense of an individual as such but as an instrument of the Cosmic Power. So these three—Sankhya, Vedanta and Tantra—together form the integral Yoga. In other words, Sankhya, Vedanta and Tantra are inter-related to each other.

Bhagavad Gita wants you to believe and realise that you are not merely a human being but an all-comprehensive and all-inclusive embodiment of the Divine. The Atman or Purusha of the Sankhya, Brahman of the Vedanta and the Siva of the Tantra are one and the

same. In order to realise the Godhead in His entirety a person must practise Sankhya Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Karma Yoga simultaneously. Sankhya Yoga is the practice for realising Purusha, by identifying oneself with the Purusha in meditation. By Vedanta or Bhakti Yoga you offer yourself completely to God, out of one-pointed love and adoration. That means through love and devotion you find union with God and realise His Brahman aspect which is the same as Purusha aspect. By dedication of all your actions to the Divine, realising that by the Divine Power alone you are doing everything you eliminate the ego-sense completely and surrender to the Divine. These three Yogas are linked together. They belong to the three aspects of our being—intellectual, emotional and physical.

OURS IS TO ATTAIN FREEDOM AND NOT TO SPECULATE

Q: Is it true that we are drawing near the end of Kali Yuga ?

Ramdas : Ramdas is wondering how an answer to this question will help us to progress to the spiritual path. We must be concerned only with our spiritual evolution. Some say the end is near, but some say the end is far away. It has become a matter for speculation. Let us not be speculative. Let us face the hard facts of life and through experience rise beyond them and realise God. Ramdas does not give any thought to the question raised by you as it is not worthwhile. Suppose a bird is caught in a cage. The one thought of the bird is to get out of the cage. Instead of doing

that, if it sits within it and tries to find out who made the cage, when it was made and why it was made, it can never set itself free. What it has to do is to use all its energy in an effort to find a way of escape.

USE TRIED REMEDIES

Q: One of the qualities of the western mind is that we should like to reason out before we try one of the many remedies which are offered to us. We like to find out which is the best before we try it. Of course, this is a great difficulty, but if we do not use this faculty of judgment we run the risk of trying the remedy which may not do us good or may even sometimes do harm.

Ramdas: We must use tried remedies. There are saints and sages who have taught us that they have tried certain remedies and found relief. So we must apply such remedies and get relief. If we go on speculating whether the remedy prescribed by the saints is good or bad before using it, we will be confronted with doubts always and we will never be able to use any. The efficacy of the remedy is known only when we actually use it. We have to believe in the words of the persons who have tried it. Too much reliance on our own judgment will not help us. If we depend upon the word of the saint and believe in the efficacy of the remedy he suggests and use it in accordance with his instructions we must surely get the same benefit as he has derived.

BE AWARE THAT YOU ARE EVER IN BLISS

Q: Since we are bathing in an ocean of bliss, can you tell us something about the ocean of bliss?

Ramdas : Ramdas is reminded here of a song sung by Kabir, the famous Sufi saint of India. He says, "The fish is living in water and still is thirsty. Hearing this I cannot but laugh and laugh." He means that we are living, moving and having our being in the ocean of immortal bliss and peace. Bliss is inside, outside and everywhere about us, and still we are miserable, and he cannot but laugh at this sad plight. God who is all power, bliss and peace, fills the entire universe; every atom of this universe is pervaded through and through by Him; and our entire being—physical, mental and spiritual—is nothing but His expression. Still we are unhappy, miserable, discontented and in want. What is the meaning of this? Kabir himself gives the reason. He says, "So long as the fish moves in the water with its back erect, the water does not get into its mouth. It has to turn to one side and then alone the water rushes into the mouth. Similarly, so long as we have the ego-sense and are attached to the world, we cannot experience this bliss though we are ever in it. If we bend or bow down to the Divine, we can enjoy that bliss and realise that we are ever immersed in it and are overflowing with it." This bending down means surrender, or to become egoless. So long as we are possessed by the individual sense, which is really false, we are unhappy and cannot have access to bliss, although it is within and without us. This is like a man in the broad daylight saying he is in darkness. This is because he has closed his eyes. When he opens them, at once there is

light for him. So when we surrender our ego-sense there is bliss for us.

AN ILLUSTRATION

In the Upanishads an instance is given that on a tree there are two birds, one sitting on the upper branch, perfectly serene and unmoving, and the other on the lower branch, running about eating the sour and sweet fruits of the tree alternately and becoming unhappy and happy. After some time the lower bird looks up and sees the upper one sitting silent and serene. Instantly the lower bird vanishes and there is only the upper bird in the tree. So long as we do not turn our gaze to God we are subject to the pleasures and pains of life; at one time we are happy and at another, miserable, swinging like a pendulum, between tears and smiles. As soon as the gaze is turned to God, we are one with Him and are freed from the bondage of life. We enjoy the serenity, calmness and bliss of the Eternal. This shows how a Jiva or individual soul suffers in the world when he does not remember Him. The release comes when he turns within and finds his union with his real Self—God. When we know we are the Eternal, we are beyond birth and death.

MEDITATION GIVES JOY AND NOT PAIN

Q: When we are on the spiritual path with the help of the God or Shakti that works in us, do we feel physical pain in the heart centre or in the centre between the eye-brows while concentrating in the heart, etc.?

Ramdas : Ramdas cannot grasp the meaning of the question. There should not be any physical pain. On the other hand, when the mind is concentrated on God, it gets peace, as He stands for bliss and peace.

Q : If such pain is felt what does it mean ?

Ramdas : There must be something wrong with the concentration. If we visualise the Divine in the centres, the pain must not come. When the mind is in tune with the Divine through concentration, we must get joy and not pain.

Q : Would your reply be the same if sometimes in meditation tears flow and we feel our throat choked with emotion ?

Ramdas : That emotion is of love and joy and not of pain and sorrow. As Ramakrishna Paramahansa would have it, the tears that flow out of pure love and joy are from the outer corners of the eyes and those that flow from the inner corners are of sorrow.

Q : Is that a psychological fact or a parable ?

Ramdas : That we have to try for ourselves.

RISE ABOVE LIGHTS AND VISIONS AND FIND THE LIGHT OF LIGHTS

Q : Sometimes I see blue light which grows more and more intense, and sometimes I see very luminous stars. There are many other experiences also. Sometimes I see colours round people and I feel these colours come out of my own head.

Ramdas : Through devotional practices our minds become pure. When they become pure, such lights and visions are seen by us. That shows that we have

spiritually advanced to a certain stage, but it is only a stage and not the end. We must transcend all stages, go beyond lights, into that supreme existence in which there are no lights, sounds, forms or names. These lights and visions are only milestones on the path leading to the ultimate goal. But it is a good thing to have such visions. They proceed from Sattwa Guna. As stated in the Hindu scriptures, when the Sattwic nature is predominant in us we get visions of divine forms and flashes of light. Sattwic quality stands for purity, light and harmony. Through devotion to God and constant remembrance of Him, the mind gets purified and rises above the two lower qualities namely, Rajas and Tamas, and abides in Sattwa Guna. There is a chance of our falling from that state, in which case the lower qualities—Rajas and Tamas—overpower us and we lose the peace we had gained. We become a prey to the desires of the lower natures. If we transcend all the three Gunas including Sattwa Guna, there will be no fall for us. We will ever live in eternal light and we will feel the divine presence always with us and that light is the Light of all lights which ever endures. It is self-existent, whereas the Sattwic light is not. These Gunas are like screens between us and God. When the screens are removed we will be basking in the light Divine at all times. Sattwa Guna is a transparent screen, Rajoguna a red screen and Tamoguna, a dark screen. When we are under the influence of Tamoguna, we are completely in the dark. When under Rajoguna, we have very dim light, and when we are in Sattwa, we have a clear screen and feel as if we are face to

face with the Divine. At this stage we are not yet entirely one with the Divine as the screen of Sattwa Guna is still there. When this screen also is removed we are filled with the divine Light permanently nay, we become that Light itself.

ALL MYSTICS HAVE THE SAME EXPERIENCE

Q: Recently I had the following experience when going to sleep. My mind was stopping altogether and I was bathing in a flood of light and the consciousness of the Infinite. As the mind had stopped it could not form an opinion of the experience.

Ramdas: That is the experience of the Sattwic state, when you have a temporary experience of union with the Divine. Since it is not constant it will gradually wear away and you will keenly feel the separation from the Divine. When you totally forget Him and the darkness seems to envelop you completely, in a state of Tamoguna, you become utterly miserable, and that is called 'the obscure night of the soul.' If you try to remember God in that state you fail to do so. You are now subject to great mental agony. In Sanskrit this state is called Viraha which means a keen sense of separation from God, producing intense sorrow. This is common in the experience of all devotees in all parts of the world on the spiritual path. Among the Christian mystics also such experiences are common. They have got their moments of exaltation due to union with God and moments of depression when they are separated from Him.

Q: How can we get out of Viraha—agony of separation from God—when we are in it?

Ramdas: By surrendering ourselves to God.

Q: If we have lost faith at that time?

Ramdas: Then contact a saint. Seek the company of a spiritually advanced soul, possibly one who has realised God. The company of such a soul will enable you to lift yourself from despondency and you will find re-union with God by his grace and help.

Q: Are there many such available?

Ramdas: Seek and you shall find. Aspire and you shall get.

St-leu-la-Forêt, France,

14th September, 1954.

PERSONAL AND IMPERSONAL VISION OF GOD

Q: You have never told us about your vision of Krishna. Will you not say something?

Ramdas: It was a wonderful vision. It was only a few days before Ramdas left Mangalore on his first pilgrimage. It was past midnight, when Ramdas was awake, as it was usual with him in those days to sit up the whole night chanting God's name, that he had the vision. Suddenly he saw Lord Krishna standing before him. Ramdas' eyes were open and he saw Krishna dancing. Krishna had a flute in his hand, a gold crown on his head, a fine **tilak** on his forehead. His colour was bluish. He had some ornaments on his body, a long garland of flowers round his neck and He was wearing a yellow silk cloth. Ramdas could hear the tinkling sound of the anklets round his feet. He looked like a boy of eight or ten years. His charming face was lit up with a bewitching smile. Ramdas must have caught the smile. That vision captivated his heart and he was for a few seconds witnessing the dance. As Ramdas talks about it now he feels as though Krishna is dancing before him. It was a thrilling experience. He was very much delighted to have the vision of Krishna in that particular form, but his desire all along was to see him as everybody and as everything in the entire universe. This vision in a particular form came to him without his praying for it. So, at that moment he intensely wished and prayed that Krishna should

grant him his universal vision and not put him off by giving his Darshan in that form. Ramdas knew well that all these forms were impermanent, and when once they appeared they would disappear. He would be satisfied only with a permanent vision. God's form which you worship may appear before you in your physical consciousness or when you are in a state of meditation in which you have partially risen above the body idea. You have the vision of your adored deity in a state of Sattwa Guna. But these visions do not entirely satisfy you because they come and go. So long as you see them you are happy. When they vanish you become unhappy. Ramdas was from the very start seeking not such a vision, but a permanent vision of God—a permanent experience of Divine presence. That, he found, could be possible only when he transcended all the lower planes of life and was fixed in the highest divine consciousness which would enable him to see Him everywhere. Once you have attained this permanent vision your awareness of God is not lost at any time. You live, move and have your being in Him. This permanent experience was what Ramdas aspired for. When the vision of Krishna came to him he was not entirely satisfied although he was for the moment happy.

A few days after this vision, in a mysterious way, Ramdas was led to Tiruvannamalai where he had Darshan of Ramana Maharshi. After the Darshan he was prompted from within to go to Arunachala Hill and remain in a cave for twenty days. Throughout his stay there he was spending day and night without a wink of

sleep in the incessant repetition of Ramnam. He ate very little food. After twenty days when he came out of the cave he was blessed with the universal vision for which he was longing. He saw the Lord everywhere—in the trees, in the stone, in the grass, in the earth, in the ground and in all directions. The divine light was pervading and vibrating. He felt thrills of ecstasy coursing through his entire frame and he was running about like a mad man to embrace everything that he could get hold of. He went to the trees and embraced them. He went to the rocks and embraced them. A man was passing that way. Ramdas ran up to him and embraced him also, because he saw his Beloved in everybody. The man was frightened and was about to run away, but Ramdas caught him and talked to him very sweetly and then the man understood that Ramdas was not after all mad. Thus he had that universal vision in Arunachala Hill a few days after the Darshan of Ramana Maharshi. Ramdas now feels that Ramana Maharshi had a hand in it.

LOVE IS ITS OWN REWARD

Q: When we ask for anything, does that show any difference in the sign of our love?

Ramdas: That depends upon what we ask. Love generally does not demand anything. Love is always satisfied with serving cheerfully. The nature of love is to express itself in service.

Q: Those who are on a pilgrimage ask for everything from God. Is that right?

Ramdas: That means they love God for what God gives them and that is not true love.

Q: Does that mean we should not ask even for universal vision ?

Ramdas: You ask for universal vision so that you may not ask for anything else from God. You should let Him do what He likes with you.

Q: How can that be reconciled with the words of Jesus, "Ask and it shall be given to you ?"

Ramdas: Given to you that which will free you from the desire to ask for anything more.

Q: Then the highest form of love must be to say "Thy will be done."

Ramdas: Certainly. Our trust in God is so great, complete and perfect that we do not demand of Him anything. Ours is to love Him and find joy in loving Him, without the object of getting anything from Him. Love is its own reward.

Q: Is that true Jnana ?

Ramdas: It is true self-surrender, and self-surrender gives you Jnana. Jnana is the realisation of your oneness with God. After realising your identity with Him, still you love Him. This is a state that comes after Jnana or supplementary to Jnana. This love born of Jnana spontaneously flows from your heart, and it does not demand anything, but in loving finds joy. This state is called Para-bhakti.

DISCRIMINATION AND SELF-SURRENDER

Q: Are there many people who can get Jnana by ways other than Bhakti ?

Ramdas: Jnana can be attained also by discrimination. They distinguish the Real from the unreal and

by rejecting the unreal, realise that they are the Real. Another process is to enquire 'Who am I ?' This is the path taught by Ramana Maharshi. When you try to find who you are, then you see that 'I' does not exist and you realise that you are the Atman. 'I' is the obstacle to realisation of the Atman and so the 'I' has to be eliminated. This is done either by surrendering the 'I' to God and thereby causing it to disappear, or by trying to find out who this 'I' is so that by such an enquiry it is discovered to be non-existent. When 'I' is not there, Atman alone is. These are the two ways of approach—one by the path of discrimination and the other by the path of self-surrender.

Q: Are these two paths not the same ?

Ramdas: They lead you to the same goal, but they are apparently different. The aspirants may employ both the methods—identification with the Atman in meditation and surrender of all his actions to the Divine. By surrender the ego is eliminated, and the same thing happens by identification with the Atman. So God-vision is with you either when you are sitting silent in meditation or when you are active in the world.

REASON SHOULD GUIDE UNTIL INTUITION DAWNS

Q: Sometimes we have an inner urge to do some particular action, and if that urge is very strong then we are apt to think that it is God who wants us to do it. How can we say it is divine urge ?

Ramdas: We have to find out the motive of the action. If the consequence of that action is harmful to

others it is surely not prompted by the Divine but by the ego.

Q: I thought it was very difficult to tell the consequences of certain actions.

Ramdas: Experience has taught us that if we do a particular action it would either be harmful or beneficial to others. That is where reason comes into play. Reason can very well judge whether our actions are conducive to the happiness of others or not.

Q: Does that mean reason has to be accepted as a sufficient judge or criterion?

Ramdas: Yes, until intuition dawns. If we are not guided by reason, then it is better for us to be guided by a wise man, because we sometimes do things impulsively without caring for the baneful effects of our actions on others. There is a beautiful saying in the Bible, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them". When we are about to do some action which causes pain to others we can put ourselves in their place and see how we would feel by such action, or how we would feel if other persons act in the same way towards us. If we find the action will be helpful to others we can of course go on with it.

, CHRIST'S PARABLE

Q: This principle "Thy will be done" seems to be apparently contrary to the parable in the Gospel of the master who gives equal sums of money to his three servants to keep for the time being and when he comes back asks what they have done with the money and understands that one had lost it and another had kept

it safe. The third returned a larger sum as he had fructified it. The master tells the servant who returned more money that he is a good servant.

Ramdas : That parable perhaps goes to show that we are not to bury money but use it so that we can get the maximum benefit out of it. Some people waste it away, some people simply preserve it and the third type make the best use of it.

BIRTH OR CASTE NO CRITERION FOR SPIRITUAL PERFECTION

Q : Is there some implicit lesson to be learnt from the fact that two of the greatest incarnations of God in India, Sri Rama and Sri Krishna, were both Kshatriyas ?

Ramdas : There is only as much significance in this as there is in the fact that Jesus was born as a carpenter. Ramdas does not attach great importance to the family in which great souls are born. But of course it proves that even for the lower classes of humanity there is a possibility of reaching highest spiritual eminence. We have in India saints drawn from different castes and strata of society. It is true that Krishna and Rama were born among the Kshatriyas. In fact, Krishna was said to be a cowherd because he was brought up in the family of cowherds. He was born of Devaki, who was the sister of an Asura called Kamsa. Prahlada was born in the family of demons. These births may be accidental or divinely ordained, but however they show to the world that whatever may be your social position in life you can elevate yourself to the highest spiritual summit and realise God in all His perfection.

SIGNIFICANCE OF KRISHNA'S DISCOURSE ON THE BATTLE-FIELD

Q : Is there anything significant about the fact that the discourse between Krishna and Arjuna forming the greatest scripture Bhagavad Gita, took place in the battle-field?

Ramdas : In the depressed condition of Arjuna, the protagonist of the war and that too at a crucial moment, when he should engage himself in the battle for the good of humanity, there was absolute need for prevailing upon him to fight. Here, Krishna the Guru, to save the situation, advises his disciple Arjuna not to desist from the fight which would liberate humanity from the clutches of the evil-doers. Making this an occasion, Sri Krishna preaches the highest philosophy, in the light of which alone Arjuna could be induced to play his part as a Kshatriya hero.

CARE OF THE BODY BEFORE AND AFTER GOD-REALISATION

Q : When something goes wrong with our physical body, is it right that we should ask God that it should be put right, so that our mind should no longer be hampered in its flight towards the Divine?

Ramdas : When you are on the spiritual path it is not right to pray to God for physical health. You can take care of your body when ill, by taking some simple medicines.

Q : In this case when something goes wrong with the body, it would be unfair to say, "Thy will be done".

Ramdas : Until we come to that state of complete surrender, let us take care of the body. When our surrender is complete we do not think of the body at all because we have offered everything to Him and it behoves Him to see that the body is looked after. The Lord says in the Bhagavad Gita :

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।

तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥

“To those who worship Me alone thinking of no other, to such devotees who are ever united with Me in contemplation I bring full security, fulfilling all their wants and taking care of them.”

Till we have attained that state we have to keep ourselves fit and healthy to continue our Sadhana. If there be some disorders in the body which prevent us from doing our spiritual practices regularly, it is quite proper for us to take steps to get over them. When God takes care of us, He does so in various ways. When there is physical illness, He may come in the form of a doctor and give us medicines. For us then everything and everybody is God. Help or anything that comes is from God. When the body is pure and has become an instrument in the hands of God for His service, it behoves God to keep it fit in every way. Even the food we get is actually from God. When persecution comes, the person thinks it comes from Him and feels that God has given it so that he may develop the power of endurance. We have heard of a saint who welcomed a serpent approaching him with all love and affection for he looked upon the serpent as his God. This is the

way how saints who have seen God everywhere behave.

A STORY

In this connection Ramdas will tell you a story narrated by Swami Vivekananda during one of his lectures in America. This is about a Sadhu. It happened during the Great Indian Mutiny in the year 1857. Indian soldiers revolted against the British Government and the Government took stern steps to put them down. The result was, people deserted the villages in panic. When they were running away they saw a Sadhu coming towards the village which they had abandoned. The villagers warned the Sadhu that the British soldiers would be there in a short time and would kill him mercilessly. The Sadhu did not pay heed to the advice but went on. When he was nearing the village a British soldier approached him and stabbed him. The Sadhu was severely injured. He fell down and was about to die. The soldier was looking at him to make sure he was dead. Before breathing his last, the Sadhu looked at the soldier, his murderer, and smilingly said, "You are also He". Even in the agony of death the Sadhu saw God in him. What a glorious vision was his ! It is indeed wonderful. Such is the vision of one who has realised God. It is evident that when the Sadhu fell down with the wound and looked at his murderer, he never felt any anger or hatred towards him. His love for him was sublime. To have love for the people who love you is natural, but to have love for persons who actually cause your death is something

extraordinary ; that is possible only when you see God in them.

FEELING FOR THE SUFFERING OF OTHERS IS A GIFT OF GOD

Q : In Geneva you slightly touched upon one topic that you felt pain when somebody hurt a plant near you. Could you tell us something about the result of universal vision ?

Ramdas : Before the universal vision is attained you get the knowledge or experience of the all-pervading, static, impersonal Self or God. In this realisation you have no relationship or connection with what is seen in name and form before you in the universe. This is realisation of the static aspect of God. Thereafter it is that you attain this universal vision by which you see, in this material world, God Himself manifest as all beings, creatures and things. Your identity with the static aspect of God develops into your identity with the manifestation in name and form, and this identification with the name and form becomes so perfect that any pain which a person feels is strangely felt by you also because you feel one with him even physically. It is the physical identification that makes you feel the suffering of others. Ramdas had that feeling even before he left Mangalore on his first pilgrimage. When he was passing through a street he found a cart-man beating the bullocks mercilessly. He was inflicting blows after blows upon the dumb creatures. Ramdas felt intense pain on his own body as if the blows were given to him. Ramdas asked the

man not to beat the bullocks but he would not listen and argued that unless beaten the bullocks would not go. He was about to give some more blows but before he did so Ramdas ran away from there as he could not bear the sight.

In Ramdas' presence once a young man was twisting a plant idly. When he saw it he felt as if his hand was being twisted and so requested the young man to stop it. Whenever Ramdas saw another in agony he was pained at heart. One side of his inner being is static, calm and unaffected but in the external physical and emotional part of his being he feels pain at the sight of suffering. He knows there are two aspects of his being—the impersonal and the personal—the former is unaffected and the latter, affected. This is indeed mysterious. God is both personal and impersonal. As personal He is all love to us and showers His grace on us. If He is not personal our prayers will be of no avail. But God responds, God has a heart and is very loving. When we realise Him, we will have a heart as tender and soft as His heart and we will feel sympathy for others. As stated in the Bible we cannot expect God to forgive our trespasses if we do not forgive the trespasses of our neighbours. Our heart must be as forgiving as God's heart. Then we will realise that we and God are one. This is the integral realisation of God in all His aspects and we become God Himself.

Q: Is it possible to understand and feel the suffering of others before this realisation of the static?

Ramdas : Some are naturally soft-hearted and they cannot bear to see the sufferings of others. It is indeed a gift of God. This is not true of all persons. Some persons have no sympathy for the sufferings of others. For those who have a kind heart God is very near and if they strive to attain God they will have Him in no time. They are always drawn towards God and they think of Him and pray to Him to make them perfect so that their love for all beings may flow out of their heart spontaneously and thereby they may get inner peace.

Q : When we actually feel for the suffering of others, can that help those who suffer ?

Ramdas : By feeling for them, sharing the suffering with them, we can bring relief to them to some extent, but the better way is to relieve it by rendering some tangible help.

WE FIGHT BECAUSE WE KNOW NOT GOD IS LOVE

Q : If God is love, how is it that in nature we see continuous fighting everywhere—in the sea, earth and the air ? Every creature is concerned with its own food and lives upon other creatures.

Ramdas : That is because everyone is not realising that God is love. If one knows that God is love one will not behave as one does now.

Q : I was thinking mostly of animal life.

Ramdas : Why not apply to human beings as well ? Human beings are no better than animals when they fight among themselves.

Q: Perhaps you talked to us about what is of interest to us. If you had talked to animals you would have talked to them of what interested them.

Ramdas: That is right.

GOOD AND BAD DREAMS

Q: It seems dreams come from God. Is it desirable for the purpose of our own evolution that we should try to understand the meaning of the messages received in dreams?

Ramdas: There are various kinds of dreams. They must be given as much importance as you give to the things going on in the waking state. If you get dreams by which you feel elevated and raised towards God, then they are very good dreams. In the waking state there are some events in your life that take you near God. They are very good. If in the waking state you do something wrong, it will take you away from God. Supposing in the dream state you have done some harm to somebody, after waking up you feel you ought not to have done it. If you have done some good thing in the dream you of course like it. Good dreams elevate you and bad dreams degrade you. All these experiences are after all on the mental plane.

EVERY SITUATION IS AS GOD WILLS

Q: When we take birth on this earth we are thrown into company of various people with whom we have certain differences. Is this the result of past Karma or should we view it as a situation in which God has placed us?

Ramdas : We should consider every situation as God-ordained. God deliberately wanted us to be born in a particular family and to be in those environments, for our good. If we take it in that light all the forces that work around us will be conducive to our spiritual progress. On the other hand, if we consider them unfavourable to us, these very forces will drag us down. We must develop an optimistic view from the very beginning of our life, love the surroundings, and love people in every way, and by so doing raise ourselves.

DEATH AND LIFE RELATE ONLY TO THE BODY

Q : You said that the same criterion should apply to experiences in the dream and waking states. Would you also say that we have to view with equal vision the dead and the living ?

Ramdas : Yes, we must develop that attitude. Otherwise we will feel the sense of separation. Death and life relate to the physical part of the human being, and the physical part is not everything. When the physical part perishes the spiritual part lives on. So the separation is only apparent and not real. Our attitude to the dead and the living should be the same.

OUR LIKES AND DISLIKES IN THIS LIFE GOVERNED BY RELATIONSHIP IN THE PREVIOUS LIFE

Q : But the souls of those who have passed away and whom we have known and loved, may have taken another birth and be therefore in different relationship with us now.

Ramdas : The relationship is only on the physical plane. We must transcend this earthly relation and

think only of the spiritual relationship which will remain life after life, whatever form the soul may take. Our relation is not of the body but of the soul. For instance, you are now related to a person physically and you call him your brother. He dies and you also pass away. In the next life you may possibly meet him in some other body. The spiritual kinship still continues. The body may be called by a different name. There are so many who are intimate brothers in this life and are likely to be born in the next life in some other relationship so that they can live together and love each other as before. Therefore, it is said, when we meet together like this, we feel we must have been already related to each other in the past and this is only a renewal of that kinship in this life. A son loses the father and that son has a son born to him. Very often among the Hindu families it is believed that the dead father of a son is born again as his son, that is, the father is born as the grandson, and very often they give the babe the name of the grandfather. The members of the family rejoice in thinking that the father has taken birth again in the family. Though the external relationship has changed, the inner kinship still continues and that is responsible for bringing them together. This explains and supports the theory of reincarnation. Our loved ones come to us again in the next life, and probably in our present life itself. Sometimes we find perfect strangers drawn towards each other and living like brothers. So also we find some close relations disliking and fighting each other. The moment you see a person sometimes you dislike him. That means you must have been enemies

in the previous birth. Such cases are not uncommon. This seems to be perfectly reasonable and logical.

HALLUCINATION Vs. SPIRITUAL VISION

Q : In regard to the spiritual visions you described some time back, can you tell us the difference between such a vision and mere hallucination ?

Ramdas : Hallucination is born of the distortions of the mind, whereas visions are born of the purity of the mind when it is filled with inner light and peace. That is the difference. Hallucination will not give your mind peace whereas visions will. Hallucination creates great disturbance in the mind. Ramdas met some years ago a Government officer in India who was subject to hallucination. He used to see serpents running about him and he could hardly sleep. He was very much depressed. He could not go to his office as even there he was seeing serpents moving about everywhere. They appeared to be real to him though nobody else saw them. He went for a change to a certain place where Ramdas also happened to go. He had heard of Ramdas and invited him to his house and explained to him all about his obsession. He wanted Ramdas to bless him so that he might be rid of his hallucination. Ramdas told him that there was only one remedy and that was the Mantra "Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram". Ramdas initiated him with the Mantra. From that moment the hallucination left him. Hallucination is produced when the mind has lost its balance and is restless or rather it is a mental aberration.

The visions of Christ, Krishna and Buddha that Ramdas saw cannot be mere hallucinations. They were born of spiritual experience and not of the mind, intellect or the senses. For the mind, intellect and senses at that time were completely at a standstill.

IN SAMADHI YOU ARE HAPPINESS ITSELF

Q: If in the dream state one should feel or see oneself that one is in Samadhi with all its accompanying emotions, should one take it as a real experience?

Ramdas: Samadhi is not accompanied by any emotion. Either in dream or in sleep one might experience that one is not the body. That is a real experience. When you are in Samadhi, emotions do not work and intellect, mind and senses are perfectly quiescent. It is in this state that Samadhi is experienced.

Q: During Samadhi is there the consciousness of happiness?

Ramdas: Consciousness of happiness? You become consciousness itself. If you say you experience happiness you are different from happiness. You are happiness itself. So Samadhi is a state which cannot be expressed in words.

FOR LIBERATION TRANSCEND THE GUNAS

Q: What part do the three Gunas—Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas—play in our spiritual evolution?

Ramdas: In the Hindu religious books, three qualities of nature are described. They are Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas. So long as the soul is subject to the control of these three qualities, it will remain in a

state of ignorance. So the struggle of the aspirant is to free himself from the clutches of these qualities. He can do so only by the grace of God who is beyond these qualities and who is the eternal witness of nature and who has complete control over nature. What the aspirant should do in his early struggle is to transcend the lower two qualities of Rajas and Tamas and get as far as possible established in the Sattwa. He has ultimately to transcend Sattwa also in order to realise his identity and oneness with God who is the universal Reality. He should shed the ignorance to which he is subject, and this can be done only by transcending the qualities of nature. All the three qualities bind him to a state of ignorance which makes him think that he is not the eternal, free Spirit but a bound individual. How these three qualities bind the soul and how the highest quality Sattwa becomes the cause of its liberation is shown in a story.

A STORY

A traveller, passing through a forest late in the evening, was captured by three robbers. All the three attacked him together. One bound him down with a rope and another took a knife to kill him. At this the third pleaded with his comrades not to kill the traveller. He prevailed upon his comrades to set him free. On coming to know that he was to go to a village nearby he escorted him up to the outskirts of the village and asked him to go further on himself. He regretted his inability to accompany him, saying that he could not go to the village as he would be arrested by the police

being a robber himself. So the robber returned. Now let us see who are these robbers. All those three are the three qualities of nature which bind the soul or jiva. Rajas tries to bind it to the desires of the flesh. Tamas seeks to destroy Jiva. The role of Sattwa is to liberate the Jiva from the clutches of Tamas and Rajas. Though Sattwa took him up to the boundary beyond which is the realm of Atman, it could not accompany him there. Even Sattwa Guna has no entry into that realm. All the three qualities must be transcended before you can enter into the vastness of divine existence in which you have to lose yourself. He who has gone there never comes back to tell the tale of his experience because there he has become one with the eternal Reality. So it is that those who have experienced the supreme union with the Divine and the resultant bliss and peace cannot express what it is. It is like trying to describe the sweetness of sugar one has tasted. A man who has eaten it can alone know its sweetness. He cannot describe it in words. Lord Buddha has beautifully put it in his teachings: 'Do not dip the string of thought into the unfathomable. He who questions errs and he who answers errs.' So he has left the highest spiritual experience which he calls Nirvana undefined. So, to reach that blessed state, it is necessary that we should rise not only above the animal but also the human levels. We must become totally divine. Then alone we can enjoy that eternal peace and freedom variously called Nirvana, Moksha, Kaivalya or Salvation.

Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantihi !

INDEX

- ADVAITA 131, 160, 190.
 AHIMSA 34, 133.
 ANAL HAQ 114.
 ANANDASHRAM 44, 47, 134,
 199, 200, 204, 244.
 ANIMALS Love of 36, 133, 203,
 have souls 108,
 humans reborn as 108.
 grades of intelligence in 111.
 ASHTANGA YOGA 151, 181.
 ASTROLOGY 255.
 AUROBINDO (SRI) teachings
 compared with
 Ramdas' 164, 222.
 Yoga of 222.
 on immortalizing the body 86.
 on God's name and form 210.
 AVADHUT GITA 219.
 BALAKRISHNA RAO (Ramdas'
 Guru) 125.
 BEAUTY 48.
 BHAKTI Why easiest 145.
 and Kundalini 144.
 preparatory and transcendent
 226.
 Sakama and Nishkama 227,
 262.
 a positive path 63.
 compared to other Yogas
 139, 143.
 BOOKS, value of 161, 235.
 BOSE, Dr. J. C. 44.
 BOUAVENTARE (SAINT) 51.
 BRAHMACHARYA 193.
 psycho-analyst's view of 258.
 BRAHMANANDA, SWAMI
 (Rakhal) 167.
 BUDDHA (GAUTAM) Passim,
 teachings of, 240.
 BUDDHISM, an off-shoot of
 Hinduism 149.
 doctrine of impermanency
 221.
 CHAKRAS 114.
 CHRIST, Passim.
 universality of 23.
 suffering on the Cross 25,
 187.
 "only son of God" 66.
 disciples of 198.
 COLOURS significance of 40,
 180.
 CONFESSION 89.
 CONVERSION 202.
 DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL
 205, 271.
 DATTATREYA 217.
 DAYANANDA SARASWATI 113.
 DEATH, explained 251, 287.
 life after 81.
 danger of communicating
 with the dead 255.
 DEVAS, worship of 262.
 DREAMS 286.
 EDUCATION 43, 71, 94, 245.

- EGO, Passim.
 elimination of 11, 105, 169.
 non-existence of 172.
 intellect the instrument of 112.
- EVIL, and good defined 167.
- EVOLUTION 38, 83, 115, 119.
 of animals 109.
- FAITH, The first step 72.
- FOOD, regulation of 104, 204.
 vegetarian and non-vegetarian 132.
- FRANCIS OF ASSISI (SAINT) 203.
- GANDHI M. K. Martyrdom of 113, 175.
- GAYATRI MANTRA 116.
- GITA (BHAGAVAD), Passim.
 Gospel of surrender 24, 165, 281.
 Karma Yoga 238.
 Immortality of Atman 39.
 Gunatita 107.
 synthesis of Yogas 128, 139, 263.
- GOD, Passim.
 personal, a ladder to impersonal 11.
 worship of the personal 95.
- GOD-REALISATION, Passim.
 meaning of 79.
 not gradual 57.
 for married people 193.
 steps to 1, 126.
- why animals cannot attain 35.
 music helps 47.
 transcends morality 49.
 universal Love essential 56
 not gained by mere reading 162, 235.
 attitude to the world after attainment 3, 124, 222.
 care of body after attainment 280.
 persistence of duality in 174.
 transcends sex-consciousness 259.
 is integral 285.
 marks of 4.
 not to be described but experienced 189.
- GOLDSMITH (OLIVER) 188.
- GRACE, Passim.
 flows through saints 128.
 self-revealing 59.
 comes before remembrance 104.
 subject to no conditions 146.
 mysterious work of 211.
 is all-in-all 100, 143, 242.
- GUNAS (TRIPLE) transcendence of 269, 290.
- GURU, Passim.
 need for 232.
 how to find 33.
 is one with God 217.
 only one 215.
 never dies 215.
 never gives up disciple 212.

- the awakener 232.
 a signpost 233.
 is non-sectarian 30.
- HAMBLIN H. T. 135.
- HAPPINESS only to be regained 172.
- HEALING (SPIRITUAL) 33.
- HUMILITY, need for 55, 101, 169.
- IGNORANCE 94, 171.
- "IN QUEST OF GOD" 64, 179.
- INTELLECT, instrument of ego 112.
- 'IN THE VISION OF GOD' 179.
- INTUITION 112, 173, 238.
- ISHTA 11, 166.
- JADA BHARATA 119.
- JAPA, essentials of 8, 166.
 Oral and Likhit compared 115.
 use of rosary in 117.
 is meditation 230.
 instructions for 14, 75, 97, 166.
 part of Bhakti Yoga 154.
- JIVANMUKTA 106.
- JNANA, dissolves duality 190.
 destroys Karma 106.
 means to attain 276.
- JOHN, ST. OF THE CROSS 186, 192, 207.
- JUDGMENT, last day of 32.
- KABIR 267.
- KAPILA 263.
- KARMA, law of karma 4, 148, 176.
 how to conquer 4, 106.
 prarabdha 107.
 God is greater than His law 148.
- KARMA YOGA 238.
- KRISHNA, Passim.
 His Impersonal "I" 23.
 vision as Mother 169.
 Ramdas' vision of 273.
 as Arjuna's Guru 280.
 and Kuntidevi 26.
- KRISHNABAI (MOTHER) 116, 136, 201.
- KRISHNAMURTHI 233.
- KRIYA YOGA 133, 151.
- KUNDALINI 143, 197.
- KUNTI DEVI 26.
- LILA 57, 94.
- LOVE, Passim.
 universal 55.
 never fails 243.
 of God in humanity 19.
 for animals 37.
 for plants 44.
 transforming power of 42, 60.
 is the essence of spirituality 55.
 in action 183.
 not tainted by sex 257.
 is God 285.

- MAHASESHA 101.
 MANSUR 114.
 MANTRA 14, 72, 97, 116, 124,
 154, 231.
 cures hallucination 289.
 MARY (VIRGIN) 191.
 MATRU DEVO BHAVA 250.
 MATSYENDRANATH 219.
 MATTER AND SPIRIT 167.
 MAYA 1, 261.
 MEDITATION 34, 61, 75, 126,
 158, 209, 268.
 MILTON 32.
 MIND methods of control 124,
 141.
 emptying impossible 62.
 sublimation, not suppression
 of 177.
 MIRA BAI 259.
 MIRACLES 202.
 MOHAMMED 23, 67, 143.
 MOKSHA four kinds 53.
 MOTHER (DIVINE) 145, 167,
 224.
 MUSIC, helps to realise God 47.
 stills the mind 98.
 NAME, Passim.
 and God are one 16, 68, 229.
 how to chant 9, 97.
 power of 108, 191, 250.
 all names lead to the same
 goal 28.
 all-sufficient Sadhana 161.
 NEW THOUGHT MOVEMENT
 155.
 NIRVANA 221, 292.
 OM 69, 116, 234.
 OM MANI PADME HUM mean-
 ing of 129.
 OM SRI RAM JAI RAM JAI JAI
 RAM meaning of 129.
 OM TAT SAT 24, 69.
 PALMISTRY 255.
 PARABHAKTI 276.
 PAVHARI BABA 216.
 PEACE 160, 236.
 PLANTS have life 44.
 respond to love 44.
 Rishis' love for 45.
 have soul 36.
 PRAHLADA 279.
 PRAKRITI 221, 259.
 PRANAYAMA dangers of 151.
 PRAYER how to pray 181.
 background for action 184.
 PSYCHO-ANALYSIS 256.
 PURIFICATION OF SELF 25,
 51, 65, 99.
 PURUSHA 168, 259.
 PURUSHOTTAMA 168.
 RAJA YOGA 144.
 RAMA 279.
 RAMAKRISHNA (SRI) 116, 216,
 222.
 RAMANA MAHARSHI (SRI)
 126, 130, 190.
 RAMDAS, Passim.
 spiritual experiences 14, 46,
 152, 188, 222, 236, 273,
 283.
 teachings compared with
 Aurobindo's 164.

- vision of Christ 273.
 vision of Krishna 273.
 influence of Ramana Maharshi on 130.
 miracles of 202.
 message to Germans 134.
 reminiscences 117, 251.
 REASON limits of 278.
 REBIRTH 38, 81, 287.
 RELIGION cannot be defended or spread through weapons 151.
 RIGHT AND WRONG 174.
 RITUALS 50, 262.
 SADHANA, Passim.
 aim and importance of 101.
 use tried paths 266.
 SAINTS, Passim.
 powers and qualities of 143.
 universality of 30.
 are Kalpatarus 208.
 SAMADARSHAN 121.
 SAMADHI description of 189, 290.
 Sahaja 127.
 SANDHYAVANDANA 116.
 SANKHYA 263.
 SANNYAS 156, 197.
 SAPTA BHUMIKAS 205.
 SARVAM KHALVIDAM
 BRAHMA 70, 243, 262.
 SATSANG value of 87, 102, 128.
 SELF-ENQUIRY 77, 277.
 SERVICE is worship 13, 151.
 SEX-IMPULSE 177, 193, 259.
 SHANKARACHARYA (SRI) 128.
 SHIVA 224.
 SIDDHAS characteristics of 108.
 SIDDESHWARANANDA (SWAMI) 180, 190.
 STRUGGLE 102, 121, 161, 249.
 SUFFERINGS how helpful 25.
 SURRENDER meaning of 169.
 makes one free 6, 281.
 safeguard against temptation 185.
 of Christ on the Cross 187.
 gives Jnana 275.
 need for 16, 20.
 SUTRATMA 80.
 TANTRA 224, 263.
 THEOLOGY problems of 90.
 THEOSOPHY 37.
 THERESA (SAINT) 181, 186, 206.
 THOMAS OF AQUINUS (SAINT) 207.
 TRINITY (CHRISTIAN) 29, 69.
 TRIPLE STATES 77, 260.
 UDASINATA meaning of 85.
 UNITY of religions 21, 179.
 of God and Son 66.
 of the world 140.
 UNIVERSAL VISION 4, 49, 57, 79, 87, 131, 139, 210, 275.
 UPANISHADS 268.

- VALMIKI 117.
 VASUDEVA SARVAMITHI 263.
 VEDANTA 71, 123, 263.
 VEDAS 263.
 VIDEHA MUKTI 85.
 VIRAHA 205, 271.
 VISHISHTA ADWAITA 8.
 VISIONS 27, 210, 269, 289.
 VIVEKANANDA (SWAMI) 215,
 221.
 WAR and Christianity 151.
 WORK how to divinise 238,
 244.
 and worship 183.
 WORSHIP 183.
 YOGA aim of 99.
 integral or purna 123, 133,
 139.
 YOGA MUDRA 158.

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By Others

Passage to Divinity— By Chandrasekhar
Gospel of Swami Ramdas by Swami Satchidananda

*(For details of the price of the above books and
of translations of the same, please write to Anandashram)*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

After receiving initiation of the *Ram Mantra* from his father, Swami Ramdas, who was then known as Vittal Rao, renounced the worldly life in 1922 and wandered as a mendicant Sadhu all over India and in the Himalayas, in a frenzy of God-intoxication, with the holy and all-powerful Ram Mantra ever on his tongue, and with God as his only refuge and guide. His was the completest surrender to the Will of God.

Many years of wandering life brought him finally back to South Kanara. Having attained spiritual liberation and God-vision, he started his mission to guide and serve mankind in order to awaken it to the awareness of God. He founded an Ashram—named Anandashram—near Kanhangad, N. Kerala, which is fostered with love and care by Mother Krishnabai, his foremost disciple and a Self-realized soul.

Swami Ramdas' writings come from the deeps of Reality and therefore go straight to the heart. In 1954, he and Mother Krishnabai went on a world tour and hundreds of their devotees, friends, and admirers who had loved and venerated them from a distance, had a chance to come into close contact with them. Since the last three decades Anandashram has been a powerful spiritual beacon, and thousands have been constantly visiting it, carrying home with them the torch of Light, Love and Service lit at the feet of the great Master.

Swami Ramdas attained *mahanirvana* in July, 1963.